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Vol. 45 No. 7

GEORGE WILL'S AMERICA

Headless Tabloid in Bottomless Pit

NATIONAL REVIEW

Watch The Russian Houdini Install Democracy, Reform The Economy, And Defeat The Hard-Liners . . .

But First, A Few Words From The Congress Of People's Deputies

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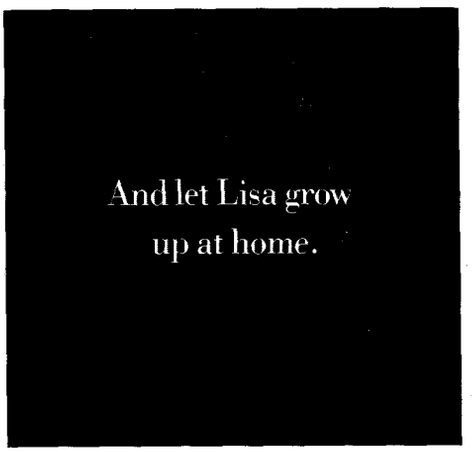

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NATIONAL REVIEW

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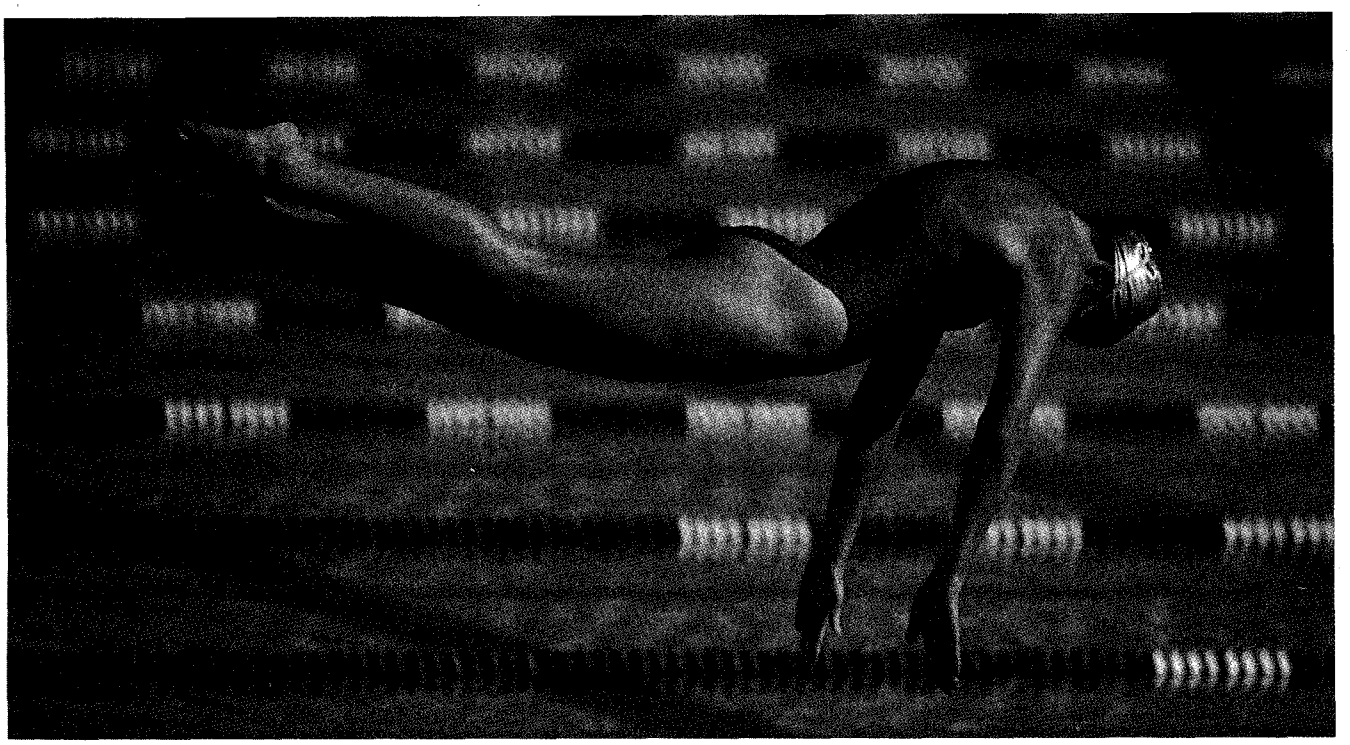

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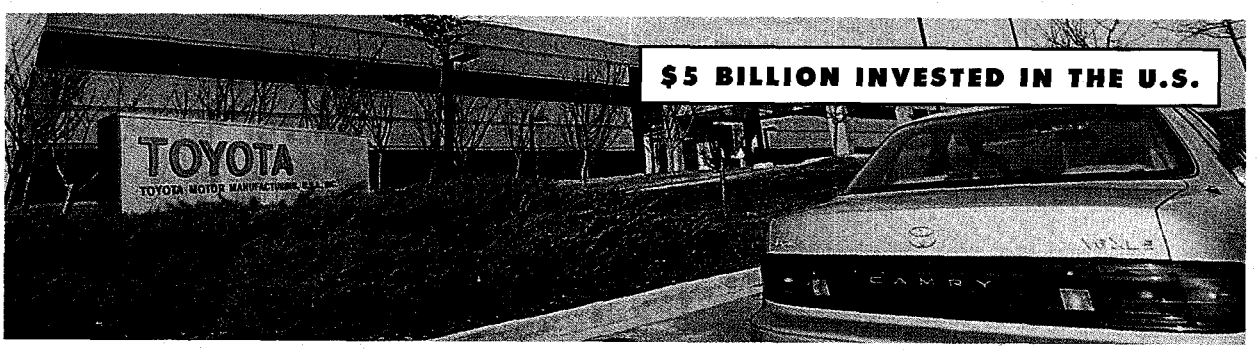

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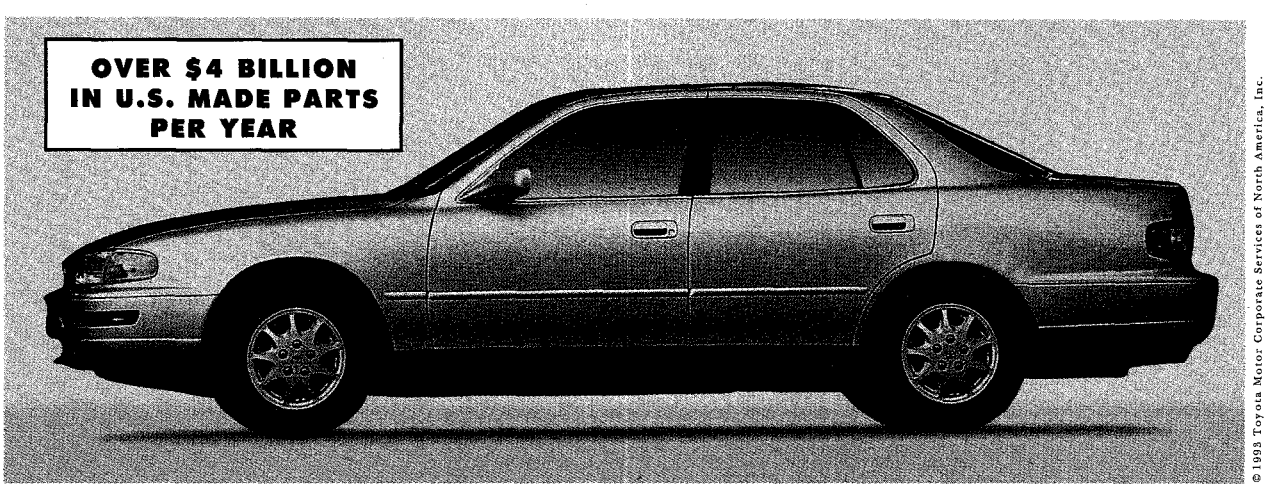

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LETTERS

The World They Created

Having regarded your excellent magazine as a haven of sanity and a beacon of conservatism since my arrival in America in August, you can imagine my consternation to find a misrepresentation of my book *Churchill: The End of Glory*, in your august pages ["Hinge of Fate," by Michael King, March 1]. Hell, we all rely on you for accuracy; what shall good conservatives do if we find you joining the ranks of the *New York Times* and other "*Pravda* West" journals?

For the record, my book was published in England in January, and it will come out here in the fall, when Harcourt Brace will publish the American edition. Then American commentators will be able to read for themselves what I actually wrote.

Among those things was not that we should have made peace with Hitler in 1941. What I actually say is that things might have been better had your Democratic President with his Wilsonian agenda not been allowed to try to shape the postwar world, and that neither he nor Churchill should have been as naïvely pro-Stalin as they were. Stalin was quite as evil as Hitler, and the war was a victory which enthroned Communism in the minds of the intelligensia and in Eastern Europe for half a century. Not much to crow about in that.

Mr. King's alternative scenario is a bit of fun, but ultimately we are faced with the fact that the war we fought between 1939 and 1945 resulted in the end of the British Empire and in America having to take on the (expensive and thankless) role of the world's policeman. Communism, socialism, and Keynesian economics, not to mention "politically correct thinking," anti-racism, and the United Nations, were all children of the new order created by Franklin Roosevelt and an unwitting Churchill. There are those who would think these admirable results, but they are usually the same people who think that Stalin was a much misunderstood man, and that Alger Hiss was innocent. They are not usually found in the ranks of the conservative-minded.

So, let us set the record straight. And keep up the good work of exposing comrade Clinton—Roosevelt without the honesty!

John Charmley
Fulton, Mo.

Planning against Parenthood

Richard John Neuhaus points out correctly that 73 per cent of 15-year-old girls and 50 per cent of 17-year-olds are virgins ["The Open Question," Feb. 1].

The corollary is that 27 per cent of 15-year-old girls and 50 per cent of 17-year-olds are sexually active; and these percentages translate into millions of American adolescents at immediate risk of life-threatening infection and/or unintended pregnancies.

Father Neuhaus rails at a variety of "moral breakdowns"—all leading to the rising rates of single motherhood among poor, black young women. Meanwhile, Planned Parenthood is in the business of saving the lives of real, live young women—simply by offering those in poor neighborhoods access to the same choices the middle class have. Our mission is enabling people, rich and poor alike, to decide for themselves if and when they're ready to welcome a child into the world.

We believe that's good for men and women, good for children, good for society. (Presumably even Father Neuhaus couldn't craft a serious challenge to that, or he wouldn't have resorted to red herrings like race, coercion, eugenics, and an attack on my grandmother, dead now for 26 years.) When teens make the choice of staying non-pregnant for the next five years, we can now offer Norplant—for the same reasons.

For the best part of a century, staunch conservatives have stood with us. We welcome their support—and are baffled by so-called conservatives who seem to want government off our backs, but under our beds.

Alexander C. Sanger
President & CEO
Planned Parenthood of N.Y.C.
New York, N.Y.

I am sorry Mr. Sanger thinks I attacked his grandmother. I said she evidenced a "zeal to bar the breeding of the socially and genetically unfit." As every scholar of the subject that I know would readily agree, Mrs. Sanger would have taken that as a compliment. She said it often enough over many years. On the misleading ways in which pro-abortionists distort the data on "sexually active" teenagers, I refer the reader to my article. And must one really make the case that Planned Parenthood is the nation's primary proponent and practitioner of abortion on demand, all of course under the rubric of "choice"? Mr. Sanger is no doubt right: There are those who think of themselves as "staunch conservatives" and agree with Planned Parenthood that the best way to fight poverty is to abort or contracept babies of the poor. Other conservatives believe that the imperative is to draw the poor into the mainstream of social opportunities and obligations. One result of that, as we know from the demonstrated pattern when people become non-poor, is more responsible parenthood. The project of promoting "safe sex"—copulation without consequences—and a cost-containment approach to normalizing promiscuity is tantamount to planning against parenthood, which might be a more appropriate name for Mr. Sanger's organization. —RJN

Hope for Somalia

My interview of Prime Minister Omer Arteh Ghalib ["Somali Peacelord," Feb. 1] did not include a section relating to what Brian Crozier describes as one of three critical objectives: securing of a U.S. naval/military base on the Horn of Africa ["The Forlorn Cause," Feb. 1].

Arteh is fully in favor of this and has expressed that view to officials at the American embassy in Riyadh and the State Department. Moreover, most of the responsible Somali leadership agrees. The Somali prime minister sees a U.S. presence as having three advantages: regional security, Somali internal security, and economic recovery.

Thus, I am guardedly optimistic that the three objectives cited by Mr. Crozier can be achieved (the other two: effective food distribution to the Somali people, and transition to a democratic regime).

Finally, while it is desirable that Somalia remain a single democratic nation, we must realize and be willing to accept the possibility of a devolution of the north and the south into confederate and perhaps totally independent states. The tribal differences are great; the two parts were relatively recently welded into a single country; the objective of stability may well be better met by letting the two halves of the country go their own, mutually respectful ways.

Ian Alexander
Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

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FROM THE EDITOR

Editor Confesses, Tells All

■ I am delighted to announce that for the first time in the magazine's history, NATIONAL REVIEW's circulation has just broken the 200,000 barrier. Our "net paid circulation," to use the jargon, is 201,138.

Bill Buckley, Dusty Rhodes, Ed Capano, and I want to thank our colleagues, our contributors, our donors who have sustained the magazine with their generosity throughout its life, and above all, you, the circulation.

■ One Sunday some years ago, I hailed a cab in New York City and asked to be taken to the *New York Post*. To my surprise, the driver asked how many children I had.

"None," I replied. "I'm not married."

"You're lucky," he said. "You don't have to tell them what it is you do for a living."

He had guessed that I was a writer on the paper—in fact, its editorial-page editor. (I was young at the time and easily influenced.) From the late 1970s to the mid 1980s, when I joined it, the *Post* had a lurid reputation. Publisher Rupert Murdoch was portrayed as an Antipodean King Kong corrupting Gotham with his rough Fleet Street brand of journalism.

In fact, the *Post* was an excellent newspaper. It enlivened and improved coverage of City Hall and Albany, breaking new stories with almost every edition. It was frank about its political preferences—and so sententiously reproved by rivals who hid their own biases in weasel adjectives like "hard-hitting" for friends and "strident" for enemies.

It had wonderfully vivid headlines like "Gaddaffy Goes Daffy" and the famous (and accurate) "Headless Body in Topless Bar," which almost reached the heights of Michael Frayn's invented model headline: "Crippled Nun in Mercy Dash to Palace."

I remember at an office party the girlfriend of the headline-writer saying to me: "I feel Vinnie is an urban expressionist poet." I had never thought of it in quite that light. But that was the *Post*—constantly expanding the boundaries of one's imagination.

Of course, the paper had its vices. I once had to wriggle hard to escape the editor's instruction that I ask a famous American stateswoman whether she had had a facelift. But the *Post* was hated not because it was "racist, homophobic, and free market," as *Time* fatuously claims, but because its sensationalism was rooted in conventional moral attitudes.

When it ran three-inch headlines about a trans-sexual murder, the very prominence it gave the story implied that there was something, well, a bit odd about that sort of thing. And the one thing that good liberals simply will not tolerate is any hint of moral disapproval.

Indeed, both politically and morally, the paper was a force for conservatism in a city that badly needs it. Its editorial page remained so under my successor, Eric Breindel, but the rest of the paper became somewhat schizoid: half-conservative, half-liberal, but written mainly by liberals, a sort of down-market *New Republic*.

Now, as Scott McConnell records, the *Post* has fallen into the hands of sinister buffoons—with one unexpected result: the old Murdoch *Post* is suddenly the object of nostalgia.

Rupert Murdoch himself is being wooed back by the liberal establishment whose scourge he was so recently. Mario Cuomo, Pat Moynihan, and Al D'Amato are reportedly urging him to re-purchase the paper. Teddy Kennedy and Fritz Hollings, whose parliamentary maneuverings forced him to sell in the first place, are said to be willing to expedite a waiver in the Senate.

Come Back, King Kong, All Is Forgiven.

Not quite right, I agree. But I was never any good at that high-falutin' urban expressionist stuff.

—JOHN O'SULLIVAN

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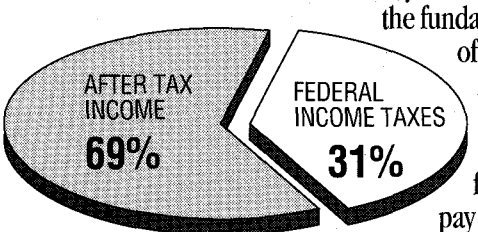

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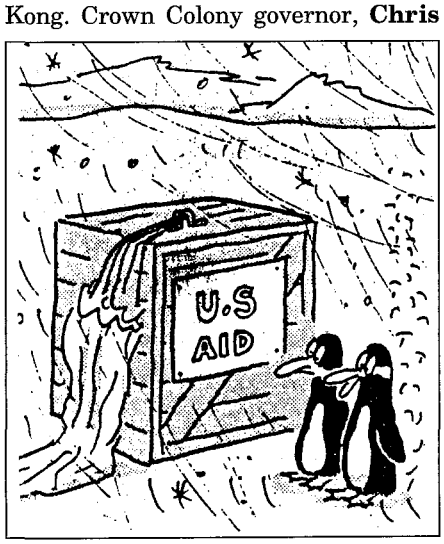
FOR THE RECORD

■ Left-wing establishment and big Democratic donors are filling top Administration posts. **Eleanor Acheson**—Boston lawyer, big-money raiser, granddaughter of **Dean Acheson**, and Wellesley friend of **Hillary Clinton**—to get either senior policy-making job at Justice or U.S. Attorney position in Massachusetts. . . . **Cynthia LeBow**, former general counsel to Senate Judiciary Committee, is said to be contender for legislative-affairs post, along with **Ralph Neas**, who led campaign against **Robert Bork**. . . . Second-level appointees pulled mostly from left-wing interest groups: Sierra Club (**David Gardiner**, assistant administrator of planning at EPA), NARAL (**Loretta M. Ucelli**, spokesman for **Carol Browner** at EPA), ACLU (**John Shattuck**, assistant secretary of state for human rights), EMILY's List (**Wendy Sherman**, legislative affairs at State Department). . . . **Robert Redford** and **Tom Brokaw** being considered to head National Parks Service. . . . **Chicago Cubs** will make Hillary Clinton the first First Lady to throw out first pitch on opening day.

■ Some 58 per cent of churchgoing Republican voters would probably leave the party if it dropped such issues as voluntary prayer and school choice from platform, according to **Marketing Research Institute** poll. Same poll finds that nearly two-thirds of those who call themselves Republicans are regular churchgoers. . . . In issues poll taken at **National Review Institute** Conservative Summit (January 24–25), family values placed second, behind only the far-and-away winner, economic growth [more detailed analysis in a future issue]. . . . Similarly at **CPAC** (February 18–21), "values/morals" got second-highest percentage as "the single most important issue" in country today; "economy" was ranked higher, by four percentage points . . . . In another portion of CPAC poll **Ronald Reagan** was furlongs ahead in question about who "represents conservative beliefs and principles." **Jack Kemp** trailed well behind. . . . **Christian Coalition** making most of *Washington Post* characterization of Religious Right as "poor, uneducated, and easy to command" with button displaying quote. . . . A few defeats for homosexual lobby: Amendment proposed by Rep. **Sam Johnson** (R., Tex.) to defund taxpayer-funded homosexual hotline won support of 111 Democrats and passed easily. **St. Patrick**'s Day parade in New York went off without gays marching under their own banner. And the Canadian Supreme Court rejected a gay man's claim of a right to medical benefits for his partner. . . . Running out of things to tax, New York Gov. **Mario Cuomo** plans to impose a $250 tax on new-born babies in order to pay parents whose children are injured at birth, thus avoiding malpractice suits. . . . **Dolores Bernadette Grier**, who works for the Archdiocese of New York, declined nomination by NAACP for its Women History Month Award because, Miss Grier says, "the NAACP supports a pro-abortion/pro-choice position."

■ It's the year of the cock in China, but they're playing chicken in Hong Kong. Crown Colony governor, **Chris Patten**, says broadening the democratic spectrum before the Colony goes back to Chinese rule in 1997 is a question of honor. But **Li Lanqing**, China's minister of foreign economic relations, says: "If the governor sticks to his present manner of doing things, economic and trade relations [with Britain] will inevitably be affected." . . . Of China's pitch for 2000 Olympics, one Western attaché in Peking says: It "could prove to be the best-choreographed Olympics since Hitler's 'Triumph of the Will' extravaganza in 1936. Only a police state like China could pull off such a show." . . . Social Notes: **Anna Moore**, former IRA member and a British prisoner, is marrying fellow terrorist convict **Bobby Corry**, a Protestant extremist; bridesmaid will be a woman imprisoned for murdering wife of her former army-officer lover. . . . **Yael Dayan**, daughter of **Moshe**, almost brought on a government crisis when she referred to **King David** as a homosexual during a parliamentary debate. . . . In *The Foreign Businessman's Guide to Doing Business in Thailand*, **Robert Cooper** recommends unusual tactic: "The practice of assassination is universally ignored by guides to . . . modern management theory; it is, however, alive and thriving . . . in Thailand, and stands as evidence of . . . the reality that not every problem can be solved by face-to-face bargaining."



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"That's nice of them."

■ Claremont Institute "Project 1996" lecture series, announced by **William A. Rusher** in *NR*'s February 15 issue, kicks off with discussion of welfare and the underclass on September 23–25. For info, contact Claremont Institute, 250 West First St., Suite 330, Claremont, Calif. 91711. . . . **Pat Buchanan**'s The American Cause to hold conference on "Winning the Culture War," May 14–15 in Washington, D.C. Speakers include **Michael Medved**, **Tom Fleming**, **Joe Sobran**, **Mary Cummins**. Registration: $185. For info, write TAC, P. O. Box 3170, Merrifield, Va. 22116-3170.

■ **James Carville** on why **Bill Clinton** had to bring in campaign staffers to help smooth over early Administration errors: "It's like how many blacks you played on the basketball team in Louisiana twenty years ago. The rule was: three at home, four on the road, and five when you're behind."

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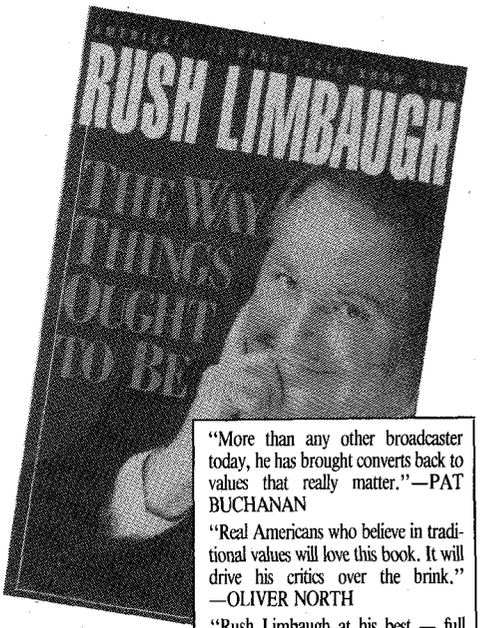

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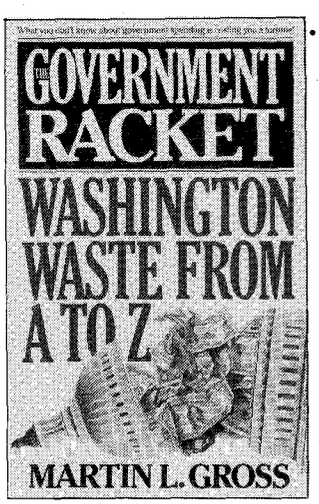

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THE WEEK

■ THE UNPREDICTABLE BILL CLINTON: *Newsweek*, on the next Supreme Court nominee: "Clinton's relentless search for diversity could take him in the direction of a woman or a minority."

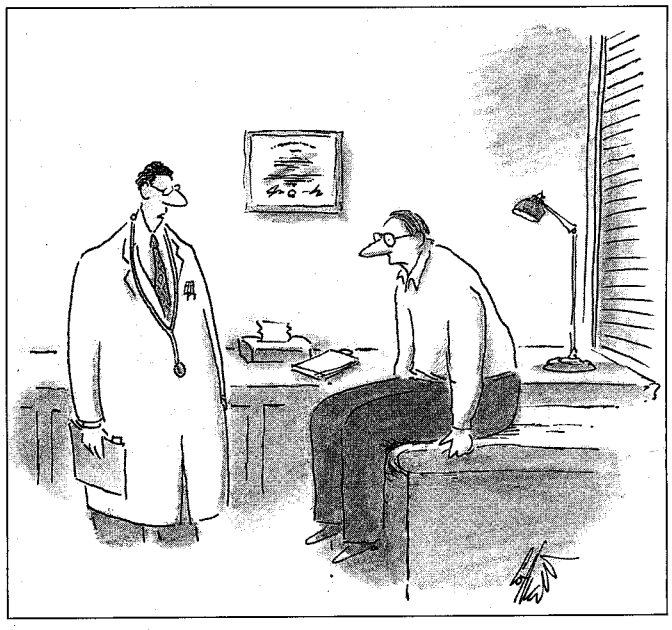
■ Let's face the realities. 1) In Byron White's successor, we will be getting someone whose jurisprudence is far closer to Hillary Clinton's than to Robert Bork's; 2) we stand virtually no chance of defeating this nomination; and 3) if we did, judging by the Attorney General affair, we would be likely to get an even worse nominee as a replacement. So what is to be done? The Justice Department several years ago put out a report, *The Constitution in the Year 2000*, setting forth hundreds of questions to be asked Supreme Court nominees as an aid in determining the constitutional direction in which they desired to take the country in areas such as criminal justice, religious freedom, civil rights, economic liberties, and others. If we have no prospect of defeating another liberal voice on the Court (and we don't, whatever happens to a particular nominee), why not use this as an occasion for an intelligent debate on the future of the Constitution? Judging by their performance on the Reno nomination, such a debate is too much to expect from Senate Republicans. Nevertheless, hearings based on the Justice Department report would contribute far more to the permanent interests of the Constitution—and achieve far more politically for the Republicans—than attempting to uncover some exotic new character flaw in the Clinton nominee.

■ Republicans on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee have stalled confirmation proceedings on Tim Wirth, President Clinton's nominee as State Department counselor. Already concerned about the former senator's close financial ties to now-bankrupt S&L bosses, Republicans found their eyebrows rising anew over allegations that Mr. Wirth shook down Colorado ski-resort owner George Gillett in 1988, pressuring him to make a campaign contribution to Senator Frank Lautenberg (D., N.J.), chairman of the Transportation Appropriations Subcommittee. An FBI report contains charges that Senator Wirth told Mr. Gillett that if he failed to make the donation, the subcommittee might cut federal aid to a Vail-area airport. Denials all round; but Senator Helms and his GOP brethren are intent on further scrutiny. Only two months into the Administration, and already a sleaze factor.

■ Meanwhile, with unmatched political resourcefulness Bill Clinton is still finding promises to send to Promise Limbo. 1) Mr. Clinton said last fall that ambassadorships wouldn't be handed to political cronies, but now he'll name Pamela Harriman, star Democratic fundraiser and socialite, as ambassador to France, and send Jean Kennedy Smith, sister of Teddy, to Ireland. 2) The Energy Department plans to seek $23.6 million for nuclear-energy research and development, despite Mr. Clinton's pledge to Congress last month to end such R&D as part of his economic package. Breaking this promise at least has the virtue of being defensible policy. But he has miles to go before we can afford to sleep.

■ Congress is considering a bill that would let federal judges carry firearms, "whether concealed or not," and would grant immunity from any civil suit arising from their use. And you thought the judiciary was unrestrained before.

■ William Bennett, co-director of Empower America, has compiled a Leading Index of Cultural Indicators to get an empirical grip on the condition of America: 19 aspects of American social life, sampled statistically at five-year intervals from 1960 to 1990. A few areas (high-school drop-out rates, high-school drug use) show some progress, but most of the motion has been backward. Over the last three decades, there has been a 560 per cent increase in violent crime, a 400-plus per cent increase in illegitimate births; a quadrupling of divorce rates; a tripling of the percentage of children living in single-parent homes; a tripling of the teenage suicide rate; and a drop of al-



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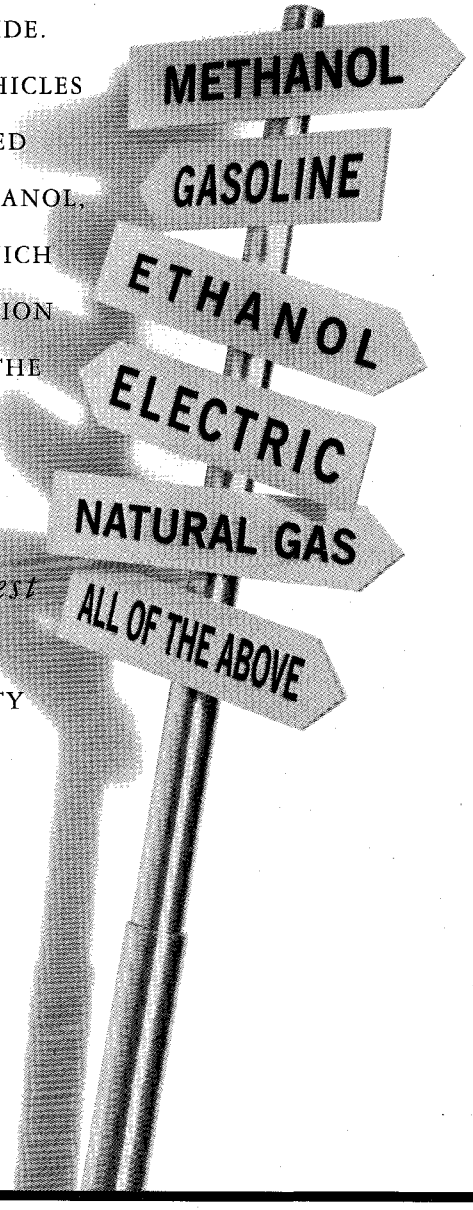

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most 80 points in SAT scores, to cite only the most dramatic bad news. This social regression, Mr. Bennett writes, "is due in large part to the enfeebled state of our social institutions and their failure to carry out a critical and time-honored task: the moral education of the young." Mr. Bennett's solutions will not please all tastes. But he is saying things that are true, important, and consequential. Those who take refuge in more comfortable solutions to less thorny problems will suffer by comparison.

■ The Blizzard of the Century raised havoc on the East Coast, dropping a foot or more of snow on the EPA, liberal editorial offices, and countless Global Warming theorists.

■ The *New York Times* has inaugurated a series, "What Price Cleanup?" on the excesses of environmentalism, examining the shaky science and the mammoth costs involved in crusades against such horrors-of-the-moment as toxic-waste dumps and ocean dumping. "What is now becoming apparent," says the *Times*, is that many of these efforts "were based on little if any sound research about the true nature of the threat. . . . And with rare exceptions, Congress approved new laws without subjecting them to even rudimentary cost–benefit analyses." That's what conservatives, including *NR*, have been saying for years. But now the political and economic costs are the responsibility of a new set of players. As the *Times* puts it: "A new Administration intent on strengthening environmental policy is settling into office when competition for scarce financial resources is keen." Next series in the paper of record: "Homeless Bums," and "Promiscuity—The Hidden Cause of AIDS."

■ There are important things that colonists ought to know about the land they settle, so we are relieved that the Department of the Interior is getting around to doing a survey of plants and animals and their habitats in the New World.

■ Most economists are predicting the economy will grow about 3 per cent this year. Sharp productivity growth combined with recent gains in employment, profits, and income should make this spring's rebound more durable than the short-lived ones in 1991 and 1992. But the long-run prognosis is not as encouraging as it was before Mr. Clinton's economic agenda became known. Higher corporate taxes, a minimum-wage hike, increased family-leave expenses, and the limitations on businesses' deductions for entertainment, moving expenses, and corporate compensation will build a new layer of costs just as corporations are successfully restructuring themselves. Add to this Mr. Clinton's policy of protecting domestic industries from low-cost foreign producers, and you have, in the words of Morgan Stanley's chief economist, Stephen Roach, "a page right out of the script of the 1970s." If the Clinton economic agenda does knock 1 per cent off real GDP growth, as Roach and other non-partisan economists increasingly believe, this will more than obliterate the 500,000 new jobs claimed for the stimulus package. And still to come is Hillary Clinton's health-care package, which looms over the industry that has created more jobs than any other during this expansion.

■ Senator John Chafee (R.—he says—R.I.), went on TV with Jay Rockefeller (D.—finally, some honesty in the family—W.Va.) to talk about health care. Mr. Chafee, who is in charge of Republican senatorial big thinking on the question, announced that Americans would just have to learn they could no longer choose their own doctors, whereupon Mr. Rockefeller hailed his honesty and courage. When will the GOP learn? The Democrats won the last election; let *them* show honesty and courage in the cause of socialized medicine—and then pay the consequences. Meanwhile, see you at the clinic, Jay.

■ A CBS/*New York Times* poll asked the question: "Do you think that, in general, the Federal Government creates more problems than it solves, or do you think it solves more problems than it creates?" In response, 69 per cent said it caused more problems, 22 per cent said it solved more problems, and 9 per cent said they didn't know, indicating that 69 per cent of the people are well informed, 22 per cent are media liberals, and 9 per cent are the government.

■ *NR* warned last issue of an impending danger from North Korea, which may be on the verge of building a nuclear weapon and thereby destabilizing all of East Asia. We also expressed doubt that the Clinton Administration would do anything other than paralyze itself with legalistic hand-wringing. Well, in mid March North Korea announced its withdrawal from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, purportedly to protest the "discriminatory" nature of the intrusive inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency. Those inspections, of course,

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His breath until his toes turn cold,
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were prompted by fresh U.S. intelligence of North Korean bomb-building, and the withdrawal from the treaty looks like an ominous prelude to announcing a bomb capability. The Administration, meanwhile, has so far lived up (or down) to our expectations. Rather than treat this like the world-class crisis it is, the U.S. has 1) met with North Korean diplomats to "express our concerns," 2) attended a meeting of the IAEA Board of Governors, which will 3) receive a report on the matter, which will be the basis for 4) a Security Council meeting. The result will probably, at best, be some economic and diplomatic sanctions and a lot of huffing and puffing while Kim Il-sung hurries to complete his program to blow everyone's house down.

■ Campus Watch: *The Wake Forest Critic*, a conservative student magazine, has been publishing for four years. This month the university threatened to sue the publication for using the words "Wake Forest" in its title. Why the sudden concern for the integrity of the university's name? *Critic* editor John Meroney recently penned an exposé of Wake Forest's most famous professor, Maya Angelou, that first appeared in *The American Spectator*, hit the op-ed pages of newspapers across the nation, and was reprinted as a front-page story in the *Critic*. It seems Miss Angelou draws a salary of more than $100,000 from Wake Forest, but has no immediate plans to teach any courses. Her supposed office at the university is a storage closet. The university's threat reeks of harassment, and the *Critic* vows to keep Wake Forest—the name of a town and much else besides the school—in its title even if it means going to court. Meanwhile, Miss Angelou can add "conservative student editor" to her roll-call of the oppressed, perhaps between "Cherokee" and "Ashanti."

■ Through friendly hands, we have received copies of correspondence between Dr. David M. Blank, Columbia University alumnus, and various authorities of his alma mater concerning the establishment some time ago of a Corliss Lamont Professorship of Civil Liberties at the Columbia Law School. Dr. Blank wrote to Columbia President Michael Sovern expressing astonishment at the oxymoronic idea of a chair in civil liberties in honor of a lifelong sycophant of Josef Stalin and almost every other Communist regime in half a century. He received a reply from noting Mr. Lamont's "long and accomplished career of many endeavors." Given this broad-minded approach, we expect Columbia Law School to be soon soliciting funds for an Andrei Vyshinsky Chair of Criminal Procedure and a Felix Dzerzhinski Chair in Law Enforcement.

■ A friend writes: "I am sick and tired of being called 'insensitive.' We so-called insensitive people have feelings too—not many, but some. We prefer to be described as 'empathy challenged,' and we think we deserve just as much consideration as, you know, gays or whatever they're calling themselves these days. Lacking compassion is not a preference, but an orientation. Believe me, none of us *choose* to be born like this—subject to constant liberal abuse, invective, and, yes, discrimination. The idea seems to be you can say anything about a guy, as long as he's 'insensitive.' Well, we're not going to take it any more." He plans to announce the formation of a PAC in the near future. Women, minorities, and gays won't be admitted because, he explains, "they're never accused of insensitivity."

■ Overheard: The ideology of the academy is Marxism–Lesbianism.

Factions and Conflagrations

THE SHOOTING of Dr. David Gunn, abortionist, in Pensacola, Florida, was murder, legally and morally. It is to be condemned without qualification. As is the killing of unborn babies to be condemned. Civilization cannot tolerate private executions, as civilization cannot long survive the license to terminate unwanted human lives.

A handful of pro-lifers are tempted to argue that there were mitigating circumstances, that Michael Griffin killed Dr. Gunn in defense of children who would otherwise have been aborted. The temptation to argue in that vein must be firmly resisted. Surprisingly, the polls show that a majority of Americans, even a majority of those who favor legal abortion, believe that abortion is tantamount to murder. But it is not murder in law, while killing Dr. Gunn was murder in law. We must persist in asserting that this is a nation ruled by law, and act accordingly. When the law is wrong, we must strive to change it; but, for the unborn and everybody else, there is no hope for justice without law.

A growing number of pro-lifers now believe that there is no hope for justice *with* law. They are being radically alienated from our constitutional order. The pro-choice media greatly exaggerate the incidence of anti-abortion violence, but we should not be surprised if such violence increases as people sense that all possibility of change "within the system" has been closed. How did we come to this unhappy pass?

In *The Federalist* Number 10 James Madison wrote about "factions" that "divided mankind into parties, inflamed them with mutual animosity, and rendered them much more disposed to vex and oppress each other than to cooperate for their common good." In the abortion dispute there are two groups that qualify as factions: the roughly 20 per cent of

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the population that favor the present unlimited abortion license, and the roughly 20 per cent that favor the national prohibition of all abortions. The remaining 60 per cent want some accommodation.

The goal of the first faction is, for the moment, politically and legally triumphant. The goal of the second faction, however arguable in principle, almost certainly cannot be achieved and, if achieved, could not be politically sustained. The grave danger to the Republic is that today the 20 per cent that want to prohibit abortion feel, correctly, that they are excluded from the political and legal process, and the 60 per cent that favor a compromise feel that their concerns are being trampled underfoot. Both face the arrogance of a Supreme Court that in the 1992 *Casey* decision declared that not the Court but the character of the nation would be "tested" by whether the American people acquiesced in a 5 to 4 opinion favoring the abortion license. And they face don't-give-an-inch pro-choicers who, not satisfied with their victory, seek to absolutize the license through the Freedom of Choice Act.

Our circumstance is eerily similar to the period following the *Dred Scott* decision of 1857. At that time, all three branches of government declared slavery to be a settled question. Then came John Brown's massacre at Harpers Ferry, then came abolitionists such as William Lloyd Garrison burning the Constitution as a compact with death, and then came the unraveling of the nation. Along the way there was Abraham Lincoln, who nobly but in vain sought a compromise. As he articulated most powerfully in his great debates with Douglas, his purpose was to contain slavery with a view toward its final elimination. That, as we understand it, is the purpose of the responsible leadership of the pro-life movement with respect to abortion.

More than a hundred years ago one faction, fearing that the other had triumphed, violently seceded from the Union. Today one faction has prevailed, at least for the moment, and the other faction is tempted to secede from the limitations of a legal order that some of its members do not hesitate to condemn as a compact with death. It is impossible to foresee anything comparable to the Civil War, but this secession, too, will be—indeed already is—accompanied by violence. It is sheer madness to think that the abortion question can be definitively settled by fiat of Court or Congress. The passion to contain abortion, with or without a view toward its final elimination, is not going to go away. No law or piling up of laws will make it disappear.

As Lincoln and Madison understood, great and vexing questions that inescapably engage profound moral disagreements cannot be settled peacefully on a national basis. The question of abortion must somehow be returned to the states. "Here again," concluded Madison, "the extent of the Union gives it the most palpable advantage. The influence of factious leaders may kindle a flame within their particular States, but will be unable to spread a general conflagration through the other States." The imperious triumph of the pro-choice faction, the attempt to impose legal and political closure on all search for compromise, is today spreading a conflagration that will leave none of us unburned.

Bill and Boris

BILL CLINTON and Boris Yeltsin are scheduled to meet in Vancouver just as Mr. Yeltsin has raised the curtain on the climactic phase of Russia's political drama. [See "Yeltsin Rolls the Dice," p. 36.]

The least likely outcome is that President Yeltsin's opponents will simply slink away in defeat. At this writing, the Communist-dominated Congress of People's Deputies is laying the groundwork for impeachment proceedings. Thus the prospect of a more brutal confrontation looms large.

President Clinton has in the last week made a series of statements apparently endorsing Mr. Yeltsin. These are welcome as far as they go. But they don't go far enough. Mr. Clinton's support is hedged about with significant qualifications, in effect warning Mr. Yeltsin that, if he resorts to force, the U.S. is likely to disavow him.

Earlier, Secretary of State Warren Christopher had told Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev that we hoped any steps his government took would be "consistent with the principles of democracy and human rights." In the statement March 20 following Mr. Yeltsin's speech, George Stephanopoulos noted pointedly that "What matters most is that Russia is and must remain a democratic country." Now Mr. Clinton says: "Boris Yeltsin is an elected president of Russia, and he has shown a great deal of courage in sticking up for democracy and civil liberties and market reforms. And I'm going to support that."

All these sound like high-minded banalities, but their effect is to deny Mr. Yeltsin an option that he may think necessary. It has certainly been on his mind—what triggered the first wave of civics lectures from Washington was his letter to Western leaders in early March asking for their support if he should take emergency measures. It is not too much to wonder if the West's public reservations did not embolden his opponents in the recent Congress. Should they sabotage the referendum, he would be faced with the awesome decision once again.

Then he would discover what the Shah of Iran must have felt when officials in the Carter Administration sent him the same paralyzing signals. We see the same naïve puritanical scruple, the same il-

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lusions about the moderation of his opponents—and perhaps the same disastrous results.

Boris Yeltsin's opponents are a "Red/Brown" coalition of old Communists and new nationalists, united to block democracy, economic reform, and better relations with the West. If they should gain ascendancy, they will kill off the START II accord, thereby resuming the strategic-arms competition. They will exacerbate tensions with Ukraine, the Baltic states, and other of Russia's neighbors, renouncing Mr. Yeltsin's policies of restraint. They will step up support for Serbia and increase arms sales abroad. They will halt the economic reform in its tracks and continue the wasteful subsidies to the state sector that are contributing to the debauchery of the currency—thus perpetuating Russia's economic and social crisis. Is that the outcome liberals would prefer to Boris's getting his hands dirty? This is liberalism as an infantile disorder.

At the Summit, Mr. Clinton should convey our support without such naïve qualifications, provided that President Yeltsin commits himself to continuity in other areas, such as the economic transformation and a conciliatory foreign and military policy. In that spirit we should be willing to provide Russia with modest economic aid directly targeted on things in our national interest (dismantling of nuclear weapons, constructive employment for defense scientists, etc.). Large, general subsidies would simply sustain the bureaucrats hostile to reform.

Ideally, we should like to see a stable democratic government in Russia pursuing reformist policies. But our second choice should be to see Boris Yeltsin prevail and preserve his ability to impose sound policies, even by authoritarian means. That is far preferable to either the kind of anarchic deterioration we have been witnessing recently or, worse, the victory of thugs who would reignite international tensions and impose their own, far worse brand of authoritarianism at home.

Wrong Choices

THE CLINTON ADMINISTRATION, as we predicted last issue, nominated Carter Administration veteran (and Stanford education dean) Marshall "Mike" Smith to a new post of "under secretary" at the Department of Education. Also named to key posts were San Diego's capable school superintendent, a (female) New York college administrator, and two (female) activists. One of the latter will head the sensitive Office for Civil Rights, which until January was led by Michael Williams, a black attorney principled and plucky enough to challenge college scholarships awarded solely on the basis of race. (This, of course, got him in Dutch with the less principled and plucky Bush Administration for which he worked.) The new Civil Rights Chief is Norma Cantu, lately Southwestern regional counsel for the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund. Watch for race-based scholarships–and other quota-style education schemes—to flourish on her watch.

Secretary Riley's team is now putting the final touches on the first of several major education bills. Officially called the "Educate America Act," this would create a slush fund for each state's school establishment to use pretty much as it likes—so long as the phrase "systemic reform" is affixed. When it comes to outcome standards, Mr. Riley's team embraces the absurd notion that these should be multiple and varied, a sure-fire prescription for chaos. For a country trying to keep track of how well its students are doing, the only thing worse than no standards is scads of disparate standards. It's actually a pretty good summary of the new team's education principles: no choices for students and parents but plenty for teachers, administrators, and school boards who might otherwise be held to account for their results.

But results are not in good repute anyway. Indeed, the most alarming feature of the Clinton package is its eagerness to return to school *inputs* as the way to gauge educational quality. The terminology has evolved—today's term of art is "opportunity to learn"—but the underlying notion hasn't changed since the Great Society. A new national commission will accordingly be charged with developing "standards that ensure that every student has access to those conditions of teaching and learning needed to provide a fair opportunity to achieve."

When this comes to pass, we can look forward to national guidelines for school expenditures, pupil–teacher ratios, the number of minutes a fourth-grade class should devote to arithmetic, teacher credentials, how many computers per classroom, and on down an endless list. States and localities that don't measure up are likely to find themselves held up to ridicule, perhaps subjected to federal sanctions, no matter how well their students perform. All this courtesy of several ex-governors who should know better, and an ex-dean who doesn't.

Junk Science

LAST WEEK'S scare from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) was radon in schools. It grabbed headlines with the claim that there are 73,000 classrooms in 15,000 schools where this radioactive gas is over the agency's "action level" of 4 pCi/L. This led Congressman Henry Waxman to say breathlessly that it is "more danger-

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ous to attend school than work in a nuclear-power plant." (He did not add that nuclear-power plants in the U.S. have proved among the safest places anyone could choose to work. Indeed, in decades' operation of up to two hundred nuclear-power plants not a single worker has died of radiation.)

Some months ago we asked the EPA for the scientific articles and reports justifying their radon action level, and after a month's delay, during which our interest ebbed, we received an intimidatingly thick package. Last week we took that EPA package off the shelf and spent some hours going through the studies. We were amazed to find that they don't support the EPA position at all.

They fail to find any statistically proven association between residential or school radon levels and lung cancer. They constantly emphasize the "uncertainty" surrounding the arithmetical extrapolation to residential radon levels of lung disease suffered by workers in mines with high radon concentrations. As one cancer scientist, Gio Gori, wrote recently, the official cancer risk assumptions are "poignantly out of step with the scientific evidence." (*Regulatory Toxicology and Pharmacology*, 16, 10-20, 1992.)

And the EPA omitted from its package the most damning set of radon/lung-cancer studies, from Bernard Cohen, professor of physics and radiation health at the University of Pittsburgh. Cohen's group has measured radon levels in 350,000 homes across the U.S. and subjected the data to every conceivable statistical check. He finds no basis for concern about low-level radon—indeed, the reverse: "The [EPA's] linear theory predicts that lung-cancer rates should increase by 7.3 per cent for each pCi/L of radon concentration in homes, whereas our studies indicate that lung cancer rates actually decrease by about 6 per cent pCi/L."

How so? An eminent biochemist, T. D. Luckey, has experimentally shown the health benefits of low-level radiation and called the process "hormesis." Cohen's statistics suggest that not only is the EPA radon scare phony, but it could deprive millions of people of the benefits of hormesis. After all, rich people have been seeking better health for centuries by going to spas whose sole distinguishing physical characteristic is that they have higher levels of radon and other sources of ionizing radiation.

Another piece of junk science from the EPA is the notion that thousands of non-smokers die of lung cancer from the smoke of smokers—a/k/a environmental tobacco smoke (ETS). Now, everyone accepts that smokers assume a major risk for themselves. They increase their risk of lung cancer at least tenfold. But ETS is cigarette smoke diluted thousands of times compared to the smoke smokers inhale directly into their lungs. And it is hard to distinguish chemically from cooking smokes and from boiler-flue, tailpipe, and industrial emissions.

The closest thing to science in the debate over ETS is a slew of statistical studies of the incidence of disease among couples where one partner smokes and the other doesn't. Some of the studies show a mild statistical association (risk ratios like 1.2, compared to ratios of 2.0 and more that are normally required to establish association and a ratio of over 10.0 for direct smoking). Most fail to meet the 95 per cent confidence level usually adopted by statisticians to exclude chance clustering.

The EPA's recent declaration that ETS is a "Class A carcinogen" was achieved by a quite shameless abandonment of regular scientific procedures. Since the American studies don't prove the case, the EPA dragged in a large collection of studies from Asia and Europe. Though it claimed to have "proved" the association by a "meta analysis" or combining of the existing studies, the EPA simply abandoned the conventional 95 per cent confidence level and applied a 90 per cent test in order to claim the result was statistically significant.

Alvan Feinstein, professor of medicine and epidemiology at Yale medical school, wrote recently in *Toxicologic Pathology* that the EPA study on environmental smoke "simply ignored the inconvenient results and emphasized those that are (in a memorable phrase) 'helpful.'" He said he had been told by a colleague that the EPA report on ETS was "rotten science" in the worthy cause of getting a smoke-free society. Professor Feinstein observed that government agencies funding scientific research often become "mechanisms of advocacy." That used to be called "lying," and it still should be.

Mrs. Clinton Breaks the Bank

Hillary, whose hearings hint
Printing presses and the mint
Face a speed-up not seen since
Debt made Argentina wince,
Plans to put your aunt, who's been
In the attic, since she's kin
But too ga-ga for the guests.
In a mental ward for tests.

W. H. VON DREELE

Lost Victory

PREVENTING a Communist takeover of El Salvador and reversing the Communist victory in Nicaragua were among the largest American foreign-policy goals of the 1980s. Nor should the extraordinary level of controversy over

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the Nicaraguan Contras obscure the broad consensus that underlay U.S. policy: it was a Democratic Congress that voted billions in aid to the Salvadoran government and more than a hundred million dollars to the Contras.

Despite the constant refrain from the Democratic Party's left wing and from the press about how it was all just plain hopeless, the American policy worked. In El Salvador, the U.S.-backed army became more and more effective. Free elections were held year after year, and voters chose first the center-left Christian Democrats, and then the conservative ARENA party to govern. By the end of the 1980s, with Soviet support waning, the Communist guerrillas in El Salvador gave up their war: they agreed to turn in their arms and fight for power at the ballot box. In Nicaragua, the Contras fighting the Marxist regime proved increasingly effective not only because of (intermittent) American help, but mainly because they had extensive popular support. Unable to eliminate them, the Sandinistas finally agreed to negotiate and to hold a free election. They lost it badly to a broad anti-Communist coalition. It was a remarkable vindication of United States policy in Central America, and a great victory for the President who designed it: Ronald Reagan.

But that victory is being eroded by the Clinton Administration as, indeed, it was by the Bush Administration. In Nicaragua, President Violeta Chamorro reigns but it's the Sandinistas who rule. They control the military and the police, retain the property they stole while in power (from mansions to bank accounts to land), and continue even now to murder their most prominent opponents. The U.S. Government grumbles, but last fall President Bush released over fifty million dollars in aid to Nicaragua.

Sandinista human-rights abuses of the 1980s—against Contra supporters, or Miskito Indians, or innocent *campesinos*—are forgotten. For the recent murders of their enemies, including former Contra commander Enrique Bermúdez, no one is ever brought to justice. Sandinista officials wield power and wealth with impunity. Is it sensible to say that democracy triumphed in Nicaragua?

In El Salvador, where the Communist guerrillas lost and surrendered their arms, the U.S. and the "international community" are hard at work punishing the army and police while the Communist side, again, faces no punishment. The police force is being reorganized, retrained, and removed from army control. That seems a fine idea, but why not insist on it as a precondition for American aid in Nicaragua too? A so-called international "Truth Commission" has investigated human-rights abuses in El Salvador, but its focus has been on government abuses, and it has not examined as carefully the awful record of Communist atrocities. So again: if a "Truth Commission" is needed to investigate and expose human-rights abuses under the elected government of President Duarte, why do we not demand a "Truth Commission" to investigate human-rights abuses by the Sandinista regime? And since the Clinton Administration recently announced it would withhold military aid to El Salvador until a purge of military officers was complete, should we not insist on the same in Nicaragua?

The United States must stop subsidizing these efforts to reverse military and political victories of democracy in Central America. This work is done in the name of human rights, but that is a flimsy premise. When "human-rights" arguments are used to punish only the Right, it is politics and vengeance masquerading in the costume of human rights. The *Washington Post* reported on March 14 that "The resignation of General René Emilio Ponce [of El Salvador] . . . was due largely to increasing U.S. pressure." It is grotesque that U.S. aid has been withheld from El Salvador because its defense minister was not forced out fast enough, while not a nickel has been withheld from Nicaragua even though Humberto Ortega continues to run its army.

The current pattern—of impunity when that benefits the Left, purges when that benefits the Left, reforms when that benefits the Left—allowed the Bush Administration to end the war with congressional Democrats over Central America. President Clinton seems happy to continue the pattern, and no doubt he will thereby keep the Left, in Congress and in Central America, happy. But this policy erodes the hard-won gains of American policy in the 1980s, betrays democracy in Central America, and abandons America's friends to slander and murder at the hands of our joint enemies. Let American pressure be used to help democrats and democracy across the board.

—ELLIOTT ABRAMS

C. Northcote Parkinson, R I P

C. NORTHCOTE PARKINSON, who died in March at the age of 83, was at first glance a man of remarkable achievement; and on second glance a man of even more remarkable achievement. A distinguished British naval historian, he was a professor at the University of Malaya in 1955 when his life was transformed by an article he wrote for *The Economist*, inspiring a Boston publisher to commission what was to be a best-selling book and triggering a second career on the American lecture circuit. His subject entered the language—"Parkinson's Law": *Work expands so as to fill the time available for its completion*. Parkinson proved his point with a devastating deadpan discussion of

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the extraordinary inverse relationship between the Royal Navy's number of capital ships and civilian personnel—and a savagely satirical mock-scientism that uncannily anticipated the great eruption of business-school bombast.

Professor Parkinson's later essays were sometimes dismissed as mere imitations of this first brilliant success. But a careful reading reveals astonishing intellectual fertility. Thus he presaged in a few lucid sentences the key insights of both supply-side and public-choice economics, and argued for smallness and against complexity at a time when economists were fixated on planning and "technostructure." But by the time the world moved his way, he had serenely gone on ("I'd said my say") to such interests as mock biographies of P. G. Wodehouse's Jeeves and C. S. Forester's Horatio Hornblower, as well as and his own series of naval novels. This, and his courageous conservatism, probably contributed to his relative eclipse. The only American school with the sense to maintain a relationship with him was Alabama's Troy State University, where he was Honorary President. After I profiled him in *Forbes* on his eightieth birthday, I was surprised to be unable to interest any American agent in managing his literary estate. Professor Parkinson might have done better to be prolix, boring, and algebraic. Posterity, however, will prefer his style, wit, and truth. R I P.

—PETER BRIMELOW

NOTES & ASIDES

■ Dear Bill:

In the past four years I have been trying to formulate the perfect riposte to Senator Bentsen's famous comment to Dan Quayle during their debate.

When Senator Bentsen asserted: "Jack Kennedy was a friend of mine, and you, sir, are no Jack Kennedy," Dan Quayle might well have replied, "Since you were such a close friend of Jack Kennedy's you must have been acquainted with his extracurricular activities. Therefore I have some difficulty in responding. But I take this as a compliment and use this occasion to thank you sincerely."

Sincerely,
Philip Shambaugh
La Jolla, Calif.

Dear Mr. Shambaugh: Hmm. Good try. I've thought about it too, but the best I could come up with is, "That's right. The Democratic Convention rejected Jack as candidate for Vice President in 1956. I had no such problems." Cordially, WFB

■ Dear Bill:

The next time some lib with the *NYTBR* under his arm pontificates at you about recycling and the environment, cattle-prod him with this quote from the July 1992 *Smithsonian*: "For the record, it should be noted that the item most frequently encountered in landfills is plain old paper—it accounts for more than 40 per cent of a landfill's contents. . . . A year's worth of copies of the *New York Times* has been estimated to be equivalent in volume to 18,660 crushed aluminum cans or 14,969 flattened Big Mac clamshells." Take a moment to gasp before going on to the next paragraph.

Along with its ritual eco-speak harassment of every other industry in America, the *Times* should be compelled to pull its own green socks up. I suggest—as an immediate relief to the environment—that the Sunday *Times* be made available for sale by the individual section. *No one* reads that hassock-sized chunk of boredom from cover to cover. Most people do the puzzle, glance at the front page, flip to "Arts and Leisure" or the lifeless sports section, then deep-six the rest. Sale by sections would perhaps be inconvenient and expensive—but inconvenience and expense are routinely prescribed for American business by the T-men.

Meanwhile, the earth is being choked, not by Pampers, but by old and never-read *New York Times* real-estate sections.

Best,
Keith [Mano]
New York, N.Y.

■ Dear William Buckley Jr.

I am a second grader. I have a question I would like you to answer. Please tell me why read is important to you. Thank you for your tiem.

Sincerely,
Charity Crable
Buckley, Wash.

Dear Charity: Read is not important to me. In fact, I can't stand him. Love, **—WFB**

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ON THE SCENE

None of the Above

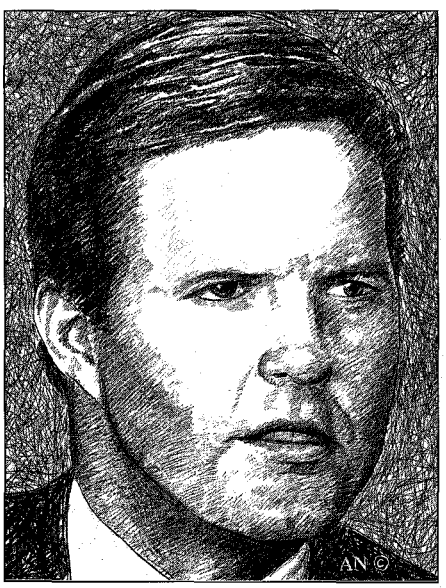
HAROLD JOHNSON

SACRAMENTO

"THE Republican Majority Coalition Is None of the Above." A pile of buttons with that slogan, lugged to the California GOP's mid-winter convention by a group of conservative collegians, never left their box. Nobody felt the need to pin one on, because the RMC was a no-show. This new organization, advertised as a grassroots juggernaut pushing an oh-so-dignified centrism as the path back to power for the GOP, was rumored to be hosting a hospitality suite somewhere; but the convention hallways offered no sign of the group's presence. No wall posters; no card tables; no handbills with the mantras of the movement's sleek, fortyish guru, former Congressman Tom Campbell of Silicon Valley.

But don't think Tom Campbell and his new group aren't forces to be reckoned with. He might be lying low at Republican get-togethers, his "majority coalition" apparently having trouble mustering real, live followers, but in the arena where he can be more confident of a constituency—the media—he is keeping a high profile indeed. Ever since the coalition's first press conference in December, when Campbell, along with Senators Warren Rudman, Nancy Kassebaum, and John Chafee, announced a drive to wean the GOP away from its alleged fixation with the "Religious Right," the Campbell publicity machine has been humming—radio ads, interviews, op-ed articles.

As it happens, his sound-bites tend to vindicate those anti-RMC buttons. Far from offering a blueprint for a Big Tent, Tom Campbell is spouting recrimination and prophesies of blood-letting, albeit in the modulated tones of the buttoned-down Stanford Law professor that he is.



Alan Nahigian

Campbell is obsessed with his loss in last year's U.S. Senate primary to the Reaganite conservative Bruce Herschensohn. To any reporter who'll listen, he tells a tale of treachery. He was the candidate with real appeal, he lets you know, the poster boy of a New Age Republicanism that blends social-issue tolerance with hard-headed economics. He was, in short, the odds-on primary victor—until he was felled by White House skulduggery. We're to believe that presidential operatives were spooked by his crusade for a visionary centrism, and they therefore recruited the third candidate—Palm Springs Mayor Sonny Bono, Cher's one-time spouse—as a spoiler.

The kind of tale to get Oliver Stone's pulse pumping, Campbell's conspiracy story fizzles for anyone with a hangup about facts. The Bush White House, for one thing, was decidedly chilly toward Herschensohn, apparently miffed over his foreign-policy criticisms. As for Sonny Bono, he insists that running for office was his idea, no one else's; he angrily calls the collusion scenario "the whining of somebody who should move on with his life—and who should start attacking Democrats and stop attacking other Republicans."

Campbell's carping doesn't end there. He's going around implying he would have disposed of Democrat Barbara Boxer in the general election, while Herschensohn, wrong on abortion and otherwise too far right, was pre-ordained to lose. Never mind that Herschensohn came achingly close to triumph, in a year when the GOP presidential campaign crashed and burned in California. Or that Republican John Seymour was trounced in the state's other U.S. Senate race, even though he is a clone of Tom Campbell on "choice" and related issues (Seymour is another founding parent of the RMC).

What now for the GOP? "I think our situation now is more comparable to 1964," Campbell suggests darkly, "with the huge internal fight between Rockefeller and Goldwater. I'm not optimistic in the short term." Nor should any other Republican be, not if Tom Campbell and his allies insist on playing the politics of exclusion, blasting conservatives like Bruce Herschensohn as certain losers who by implication deserve no more than bit parts under the Big Tent.

Do "unity" and "coalition," in the RMC's vocabulary, mean "only on our terms"? Campbell's chief campaign contributor, billionaire computer magnate David Packard, has said he will no longer help pro-life Republicans. Campbell's own comments on the subject are ambiguous. For what it's worth, Herschensohn campaign manager Ken Khachigian says Campbell "didn't lift a finger" to aid them in the general election. What a contrast to the way cultural conservatives backed Paul Coverdell in Georgia's recent Senate race, even though he's hardly simon-pure, by their lights.

There is something chilling—and absurd—about Campbell's ground rules for a remade Republicanism. "Our purpose is to exclude issues of morality and conscience as litmus tests," he declared in announcing the RMC's creation. A breathtaking innovation for a political organization founded to fight slavery. George Weigel of the Ethics and Public Policy

Mr. Johnson is an editorial writer at the Orange County Register.

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Center asks the obvious question: "Exclude issues of morality and conscience? Will white supremacist David Duke be welcome in the Republican Majority Coalition? How about Dr. Jack Kevorkian . . . ? Why not go all the way and invite Lyndon LaRouche . . . ?" For that matter, should the party throw open to debate its commitment to economic liberty, itself an expression of an ethical calculus? To divorce politics from conscience is to subordinate it to nothing but interest-group muscle flexing. Even a Stanford prof ought to be able to grasp that.

The Campbell agenda should sound other alarms as well. He touts his "New Conservatism" as liberal only on abortion, gay rights, and other "lifestyle" questions. In money matters, he'll have you know, he is a free-marketer with the best of them. He can point to a narrow range of votes in Congress to support that boast, but his larger record contradicts it. There's his infatuation, for instance, with hiring-quota bills—not just the disastrous one that Bush signed, but the worse Kennedy proposal he vetoed, as well as the radical Schroeder–Townsend version that lacked even the figleaf of a ban on race-norming.

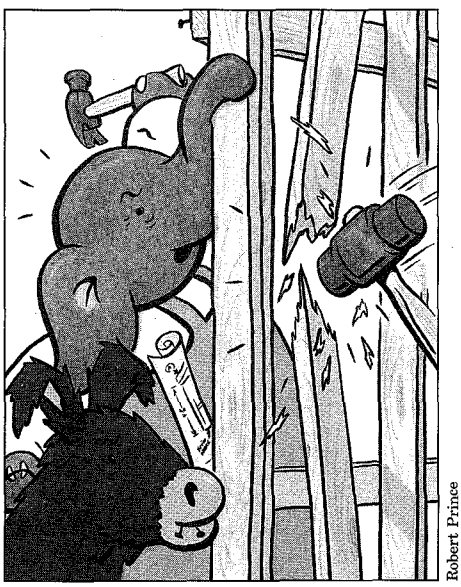
With an ACU record of just 50, Campbell was acting in character when he called for a grabbag of new taxes months before Bush had eaten his "read may lips" vow. The New Conservative congressman was also an enthusiast for indirect levies in the form of expanded federal mandates, among them the family-leave bill and the recession-stoking Clean Air Act and Americans with Disabilities Act. Given to "enviro-speak," as L.A. talk-show host Hugh Hewitt has put it, Campbell opposes off-shore oil drilling and co-sponsored a plan to close off vast tracts of Southern California desert to recreationists.

The apostle of coalition-building demonstrated a talent for demagoguery during the primary, branding Herschensohn a liar over a difference in their anti-crime platforms. He denounced his opponent as an enemy of Social Security for the crime of suggesting, years earlier, a gradual privatization plan. And he warned homeowners of an ominous Herschensohn scheme to scuttle the mortgage deduction—a distorted depiction of a phased-in flat-tax proposal.

Republicans across the nation should be aware that Tom Campbell is bidding to help lead their party into next century, in a direction of his own choosing. About his New Conservatism, as his record shows, there are several things that must be kept in mind: it is not new; it is not conservative; it is not the route to victory. □

Empowering Clinton

VIN WEBER



Robert Prince

WASHINGTON, D.C.

WHEN HE was first appointed to HUD, Jack Kemp was fond of saying that President Bush had hired a Housing Secretary with an economic policy, a defense policy, and a foreign policy. For his part, President Clinton has hired an Agriculture Secretary with an urban policy.

As a congressman, Mike Espy made a name for himself as one of the Democratic Party's leading advocates of conservative empowerment strategies to help the urban poor. In the Clinton Cabinet, however, Espy could find himself in the same position that Kemp was in these past four years—an outcast in his own Administration.

During the campaign, Bill Clinton portrayed himself as a "New Democrat." But as President, Clinton has proved to be more of an Old Democrat than his party's liberal wing ever hoped. He has proposed massive defense cuts, massive tax increases, and billions of dollars in new spending and he has made gays in the military and abortion his first agenda items. Empowerment seems to be the only issue left that could give meaning to his claim to be a New Democrat. But the prospects for an aggressive Clinton empowerment agenda are not encouraging.

For there is a battle brewing within the Administration over control of its urban-poverty agenda. On one side is the liberal establishment, backed by the powerful and entrenched welfare lobby, which sees empowerment proposals, as the liberal Eisenhower Institute recently put it, as the "fool's gold" of the 1980s. On the other side are the empowerment advocates, led by Espy and backed by a growing number of both Democrats and Republicans on Capitol Hill.

Which agenda will end up on top? As an admiring Tom Edsall recently noted in the *Washington Post*, the key to Clinton's success is that he "talks right and walks left." Thus far, empowerment looks like no exception.

On a campaign stop in Detroit last year Clinton spoke glowingly of the HOPE program (Homeownership and Opportunity for People Everywhere) and said that, if elected, he would seek to expand tenant management and tenant ownership. He even tapped Mike Espy to write these proposals into the Democratic platform.

But the statements coming out of HUD indicate that, so far from expanding HOPE, the Administration might abandon the almost six hundred projects in the HOPE pipeline. HOPE should not be heavy lifting for the Administration—all it requires is funding for the waiting projects. But HOPE has enemies in the Clinton Administration.

HUD Secretary Henry Cisneros has been disparaging of HOPE. And despite their requests for a meeting, Cisneros has shut out Kimi Gray and the national tenant-management community. The secretary seems more interested in using HUD to fund new construction (while continuing to sub-

Mr. Weber, the former congressman from Minnesota, is co-founder of the new conservative group Empower America.

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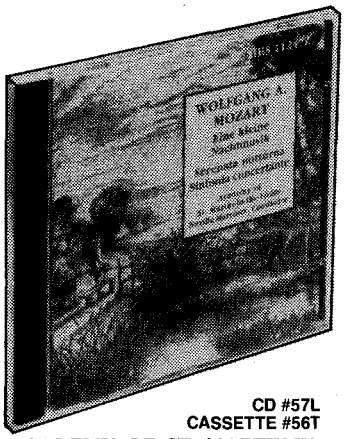

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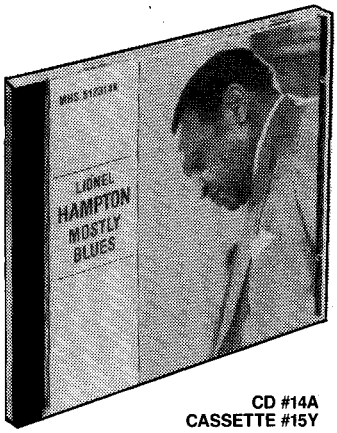

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sidize the more than 100,000 vacant public-housing units across the country) than in using the same resources to create private property and economic independence for low-income citizens.

But Cisneros does not want to take the blame for zeroing out HOPE, so the Administration has enlisted the Office of Management and Budget to do the dirty work. Unofficial word is that OMB will replace HOPE with something called HOPE III—a scaled-down version which guts the original plan's program to privatize public housing. Homeownership for low-income Americans, it seems, will soon go the way of the middle-class tax cut.

Enterprise zones are another area where the Clinton Administration could adopt an innovative approach. But Clinton's economic plan allocates only $2.42 billion over four years, enough to fund about 25 "demonstration zones" across the country. In the wake of the L.A. riots, this go-slow approach is woefully insufficient, excluding some 150 desperate communities. And Clinton's limited plan lacks the capital-gains tax incentives that are the very basis for attracting businesses to these distressed areas.

Yet even this meager proposal is under attack within the Administration. As one high-level Clinton official recently stated, "Anyone who has worked in the hardest-hit areas, in the real inner-cities, knows [enterprise zones are] nonsense. . . . Hopefully we will be able to work within the Administration to convince the policy people there are better ideas and more effective ways to spend these funds."

But if empowerment is losing steam in the White House, it is gaining support in Congress. Last month, Representatives Curt Weldon (R., Pa.) and Rob Andrews (D., N.J.) announced the formation of a bipartisan Congressional Empowerment Caucus. Though only weeks old, the caucus has 18 members and is working hard on a number of bills—for example, one sponsored by Representative Tony Hall (D., Ohio), to raise the savings limit on welfare recipients from the current maximum of $1,000 to $10,000, allowing them to save money for education or to purchase a home. Caucus co-chairmen Weldon and Andrews will soon introduce the Ownership Empowerment Act, which seeks a 100 per cent reduction in the capital-gains tax for qualified enterprise-zone businesses. In addition, the caucus is pushing for full funding of HOPE.

Many of the Caucus members are first- and second-term congressmen, some representing poor urban districts. Many held local office before coming to Congress, and developed their support for empowerment from their experience at the grassroots level. Weldon and Andrews were both county supervisors, Robert Menendez (D., N.J.) was mayor of Union City, and Walter Tucker (D., Calif.) was mayor of Compton.

In addition to the bipartisan caucus, several Republican empowerment groups are forming. For example, Duncan Hunter (R., Calif.), chairman of the Republican Research Committee, has joined with Bob Livingston (R., La.) and Joe Knollenberg (R., Mich.) to form the Task Force on Empowerment. And Bill Paxon (R., N.Y.) and Gary Franks (R., Conn.) are serving as co-chairmen of the Task Force on Welfare Reform.

Their legions are small compared to those of the liberal establishment. But these congressmen will press the White House toward a more aggressive—and progressive—empowerment policy.

Weldon and Andrews have, in fact, gone out of their way to extend a hand of cooperation to the President. In a March 8 letter to Mr. Clinton, they declared: "The bipartisan congressional Empowerment Caucus stands ready to work with you," and requested a meeting with his domestic-policy team to discuss improving the Administration's enterprise-zone proposals.

Perhaps they'll have more luck getting into the White House than Kimi Gray has had getting into HUD. □

Italy's Hopelessness

ANTONIO MARTINO

LET'S not indulge in understatements: if Italy manages to survive its present crisis, chances are that God is Italian. The present mess makes all previous ones look like minor disturbances. During a meeting in Liechtenstein a couple of years ago, George Urban asked me to say something about Italy's organized crime. I responded that I thought organized politics did far more damage than organized crime. George replied: "How can you tell them apart?" Little did we know!

In the past several months the media have dedicated most of their coverage to indictments for political kickbacks, bribery, and corruption. So far 112 out of the 945 Deputies and Senators have been charged with corruption, and three ministers have resigned in response to accusations. Many have been charged on more than one count—the treasurer of the DC (Christian Democrats) leading the group with 19 different indictments, followed by Bettino Craxi, the former Socialist prime minister, with 8 or 9 (it's hard to keep track). Nearly all political parties are involved, although to a very different extent: Socialists, Christian Democrats, and ex-Communists are accused of multi-million-dollar misappropriations and, in some cases, of outright fraud; whereas the leaders of the tiny Republican and Liberal parties are accused of minor violations involving small contributions. Nor are politicians the only targets of the indictment orgy: top managers of major corporations, both private (like FIAT's number-three manager) and public (like the CEO of ENI, the state energy giant) are currently in jail.

The public has reacted to the scandals with outrage. Never before in the history of a country that has always regarded politicians with casual contempt has the political class been so despised. A few weeks ago, when the then–minister of finance, who had not yet been charged with anything, was on a flight from Rome to Turin, the person seated next to him stood up and started shouting that he didn't want to sit next to a thief, and other passengers cheered wildly.

For someone like myself, who has always regarded politicians as a modern version of the bubonic plague, all this should be comforting. It isn't. The

Mr. Martino is professor of economics and dean of political science at L.U.I.S.S. University, Rome.

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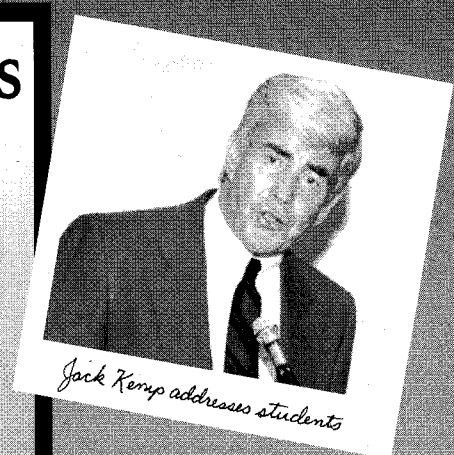

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reasons for not rejoicing are twofold. First, the judiciary is openly abusing its powers in order to conduct what it considers a just crusade against the "political system." Its methods are unacceptable. People are kept in jail for months with no valid evidence of guilt in order to extort a confession. Usually the accused learn from newspapers that they are under investigation long before charges are formally brought. And, given the unbelievable sluggishness of our judiciary procedures, it may take ten or twenty years for the innocent to be acquitted—too late for restoring their honor. Wholesale lynching is too high a price to pay for a political cleanup.

In addition, the widespread disaffection of the electorate is making the country even less governable than usual. In the next few years, barring a miracle, we'll look back with nostalgia at the good old days when chaos was bearable, if not outright agreeable.

This leads me to the second issue. The reaction of Italian public opinion confirms the late Harry G. Johnson's remark: "society wastes much effort—and considerable moral indignation—in attacking the symptoms rather than the causes of its macroeconomic diseases." A large majority of Italians of all parties are convinced that the country's problems are owing to *partitocrazia* (rule by political parties) and can be fixed by a change in the electoral system, moving from proportional representation to a majoritarian, single-constituency system. Once again they fault the midwife for the baby. The abuse of politics is not a peculiarly Italian phenomenon; it exists under many different skies. No electoral system is immune from criticism nowadays—whether in England, in France, or in the United States. The reason for the criticism is painfully simple: people blame the electoral system for the excessive intrusion of politics into their lives. And indeed it is excessive: nothing can justify the government's taking more than 50 per cent of people's income. But the details of the electoral system are not what caused this usurpation.

Corruption, too, in its present forms, results from the size of the public sector. Nobody would be so foolish as to spend $1,000 of his own money in order to get a bribe of $100. One can have corruption of this sort only if the

Fred Carlson

person who pays the $1,000 is different from the one who pockets the $100, and is not aware that the only purpose of the $1,000 disbursement is to allow the other person to get the $100. These circumstances are highly unlikely among private contractors; they can only exist where government is involved.

Hypnotized by the scandals and by the discussions of electoral reforms, Italians do not seem to notice that their country is going bankrupt. The annual deficit exceeds the sum of the deficits of the other 11 EC countries, amounting to 10.6 per cent of GDP. Total public debt outstanding has reached the impressive figure of 1,600,000,000,000,000 *lire* ($1,600 trillion)—106 per cent of GDP or two and a half times the foreign debt of all Latin American countries taken together. Taxation is skyrocketing: Italy is second only to France in the G7 group of industrialized countries in terms of tax revenue as a percentage of GDP. The present government (if you forgive the exaggeration) has introduced 17 new taxes in 5 months. In 1960 total public-sector revenue amounted to 31 per cent of GDP; in 1980 34.6 per cent; in 1991 45 per cent. Should the economy in fact enter a recession in 1993, as some expect, it will be a bloody mess. A sharp reduction in savings, while the deficit remains unchanged or even grows, would push real interest rates up further, thereby contributing an additional recessionary impulse. Though I doubt that this is going to happen (the sharp devaluation of the *lira* is producing an export-led recovery), the financial problem remains acute.

Italy's problems are so deep and far-reaching that nothing short of a revolution can solve them. Only time will tell if this is what is going on now, or if Mussolini was right when he said that governing Italy "isn't difficult, it's just useless." □

St. Patrick's War

JOHN P. McCARTHY

NEW YORK

IN RETURNING the permit for the St. Patrick's Day Parade to its traditional holders, the New York Ancient Order of Hibernians, and allowing them to exclude the Irish Lesbian and Gay Organization from the line of march, Federal District Judge Kevin Thomas Duffy was especially stinging in his rebuke of the New York City Human Rights Commission. He viewed the latter as comparable to the "thought police" of *1984*, and saw "naming the thought police the 'Human Rights Commission'" as "particularly Orwellian." Even the *New York Times* approved the ruling, although it condemned the Hibernians' assertion that homosexual behavior is immoral as a "bigoted message," and hoped the public would ignore the parade.

Very few commentators took note of a deeper controversy behind the issue of ILGO's inclusion in the parade. In many ways that was just the smokescreen by which a group of political activists hoped to gain control of this celebration of the Irish-American Catholic heritage and turn it into a militant political statement on Northern Ireland. In a maneuver redolent of the Popular Front tactics of another era, the zealots had hoped to gain the support of the gays' formidable political and media allies.

Admittedly, the traditional organiz-

Mr. McCarthy is a professor of history at Fordham University, and author of the forthcoming Dissent from Irish America *(University Press of America).*

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ers have in the past sent mixed signals about the parade being of a primarily religious character. For instance, in 1983 they had selected as grand marshal the leader of Noraid, the American sympathizers with the Sinn Fein/IRA cause. Terence Cardinal Cooke, the archbishop at the time, anxious to dissociate himself from any implied ecclesiastical approbation of the IRA, did not make his usual appearance on the steps of Saint Patrick's Cathedral until after the grand marshal had passed. Noraid and its allies tried to get others of their circle selected in succeeding years, but the parade committee was able to get its act together and resist their efforts.

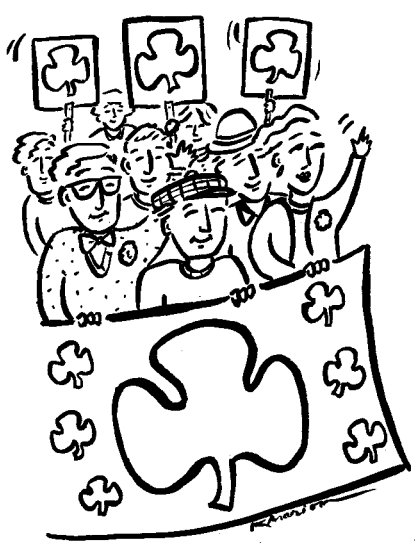
However, a new dimension to the situation was the dramatic increase in Irish emigration to New York owing to high unemployment in Ireland. Some of the newcomers were quite different in temperament from the earlier immigrants, who make up the AOH rank and file. Having some university education, being taken up with the trendier European radical enthusiasms, and often embittered at having had to accept positions for which they feel themselves overqualified, a number of them are disdainful of the social, political, and religious conservatism of Irish-American society in general.

Their perspective found an outlet in a new ethnic weekly, the *Irish Voice*, which is characterized by a sarcastic irreverence and political radicalism. Two years ago the *Irish Voice* circle hit upon a choice tactic to use against the middle-aged and often blue-collar leaders of the AOH by advancing the application of the Irish Lesbian and Gay Organization for a place in the line of march. The 1991 parade committee, unfortunately, did not meet the issue head on and declare ILGO inappropriate in a parade run under the auspices of a Catholic organization. Instead, the committee put the application on a lengthy waiting list and hoped the question would disappear.

At that point, a rebellious unit within the AOH invited ILGO to march as its guest. Mayor David Dinkins also joined them, and the response from the spectators was predictable: beer cans tossed at the mayor and general heckling along the parade route, all of which made great copy for columnists like rogue Irish Catholic Jimmy Breslin.

In March of 1992, a judge of the Human Rights Commission ruled that the parade committee could discriminate in a private event and ILGO was excluded. Then, last October, the full commission overturned the individual member's ruling and stated that ILGO should be allowed to march. To make sure that ILGO would be included, Raymond Kelly, the recently appointed police commissioner, issued the parade permit to an entirely new group.

Calling themselves the Saint Patrick's Day Parade Committee, Inc., they indicated they would not only include ILGO, but also make the parade the occasion for a political statement on Northern Ireland. Major figures in the new group included the 1930s-style radical, former City Council President, Paul O'Dwyer; the special prosecutor in the celebrated Howard Beach trial a few years ago, Charles Hynes; and the Noraid leader, Martin Galvin.



Kate Marion

John Cardinal O'Connor criticized the permit award as a public intrusion on a church festival and threatened to withdraw the numerous diocesan-affiliated organizations and schools from participation. Next, the national leader of the AOH, George J. Clough Jr., called for AOH members to boycott the parade if ILGO was included.

The new committee then threw in the towel, and returned the permit. They knew any event they sponsored would draw, not the scores of thousands who usually march, but the hundreds who take part in most pro-IRA demonstrations.

The clearest indication that they knew the shallowness of their support in the Irish community was their absolute hostility to the suggestion of both the *New York Times* and the New York Civil Liberties Union that there be two parades—one religious and one political. Having two parades would have been a logical solution. The religious parade could proceed, as always, past Saint Patrick's Cathedral. The political parade could start at the Brooklyn DA's office and move across the Brooklyn Bridge to City Hall and perhaps have as its grand marshall the Pope-baiting Irish singer, Sinead O'Connor. Better yet, why not have it on another day entirely. The pagan and Celtic festival of Halloween would be appropriate.

From then on, it was just a matter of waiting for the sensible ruling by Judge Duffy. Evidence of the complete rout of the radical elements was the resignation the week before the parade of the editor of the *Irish Voice* who just a month before had indulged in warnings to Cardinal O'Connor about "a confrontation between the gay community and the parade." The confrontation amounted to a symbolic sit-down by a couple of hundred, expeditiously cleared by the police.

Politically correct public figures like Governor Cuomo and Mayor Dinkins stayed away. (Many considered their absence an improvement.) The parade had a smaller turnout than usual, caused by the reluctance of out-of-town contingents to make advance commitments while the status of the parade was uncertain, and by particularly vile weather. Nonetheless, it was its usual success.

The mayor's position on the whole affair had been opposed by such astute politicians as Peter Vallone, the Democratic leader in the City Council, and former Mayor Ed Koch. The probable Republican challenger to Dinkins, Rudolph W. Giuliani, had no hestiation in marching.

The defeat of the ILGO radicals and the "Human Rights" thought police is the second victory in just a few weeks for New York's beleaguered forces of normalcy, following on the heels of the ouster of Schools Chancellor Joseph Fernandez and his radical Children of the Rainbow curriculum. All this might just be an indication that a quite different political atmosphere could prevail in New York next autumn. □

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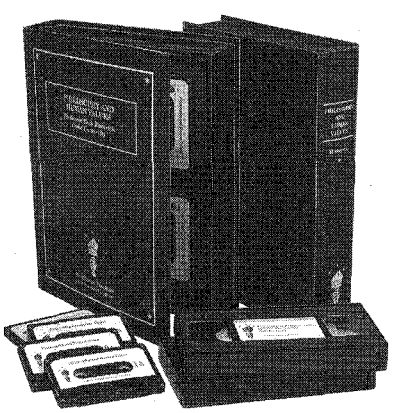

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America, in large measure because of conservative achievements, is safer today than it has been in 217 years. Furthermore, the government today (this is the good side of the budget deficit) enjoys less latitude for action than at any time since the 1920s, or since it slipped the leash of the enumerated-powers doctrine of the Constitution. Finally, the problems most vexing to the most thoughtful Americans are problems singularly immune to the attentions of government in general and particularly government based in a capital on the fringe of a vast continent.

Losing an election is not the worst thing that can happen. Indeed, it is part of the dynamic of our politics. And 12 years in power is a very long time. Only four times in American history has a political party held power for longer than that. Also, the Republican Party fell victim last year to a paradox of politics, which is that the party in power is often punished for its successes. We tend to forget that the Republican Party was propelled into power 12 years ago by, above all else, inflation. As the currency lost its function as a store of value, inflation summed up the general sense that American life at the everyday transaction level was no longer functioning well. Furthermore, the Republican Party was held together by an anti-Soviet foreign policy. Inflation is gone, the Soviet Union is gone, and, not coincidentally, so are the Republicans. But they will find other things to do.

We shall be watching to see if another truth of politics holds. That is that great leaders—Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher spring to mind—often leave their most lasting impress on the opposition party. The Labour Party today is very different after its hammering by Mrs. Thatcher. We shall see if the Democrats also have been changed. The question is whether Bill Clinton is Henry of Navarre. You will remember that Henry twice converted to Catholicism in order to keep his crown, saying on one memorable occasion the words that are the slogan of every political class: "Paris is well worth a Mass." Today the question is: Was the White House well worth a pose of moderation? We shall see.

Dry Sterile Thunder

I DON'T THINK it is losing that depresses us. What has depressed us is that this loss was so sterile. In words that T. S. Eliot used, it was "dry sterile thunder without rain." There was no sense of an honorable banner borne to honorable defeat. William Jennings Bryan three times lost the Presidency. But before he was done, the Democratic Party had been largely transformed. The most honorable, the most fruitful defeat of modern times was suffered by the man for whom I cast my first vote for President, Barry Goldwater, in 1964.

Four years ago, in the inaugural address that George Bush gave, the seeds of trouble were apparent. He made mistake number one when he said our problem is that we have more will than wallet (indicating that he wished the government had more wallet). Mistake number two was not understanding that the great prob-

Mr. Will's latest book is Restoration: Congress, Term Limits, and the Recovery of Deliberative Democracy.

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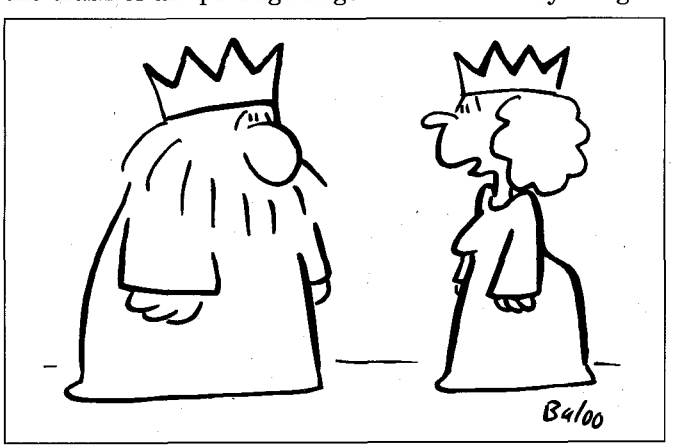
lem of politics always is an insufficiency of political will. Then he turned to George Mitchell, held out his hand, and said the people "didn't send us here to bicker." Actually, they send people here to Washington to fight and argue. That's why they send two parties here, because they differ. And when someone refers to political differences as "bickering," that person lacks the ballast of ideas that makes these things seem more than inconsequential bickerings.

The question is: Has the Republican Party learned a lesson? The lesson of 1992 was that ideas matter. They matter most of all for a political organization that will not define itself in terms of interests and therefore must define itself in terms of ideas. Forgetting that is a mistake we dare not make often. After Dorothy Parker's third, or perhaps fourth, suicide attempt (no one was counting at that point), a friend said, "Dorothy, if you keep this up, you are going to make yourself very sick."

Now, Mr. Clinton and his party seriously believe they can preside over another coming of Camelot. They misunderstand the great change in the American public in the last 32 years. An unsentimental coolness has taken over. The American people look upon the political class today the way that Bear Bryant looked upon football players—"Be good or be gone."

The great, stark political fact of the last 32 years is the crash of the prestige of government. Today the government reminds most Americans of the old Washington Senators, back when the slogan was "Washington—first in war, first in peace, and last in the American League." They were run by a man named Clark Griffith, who said one day, "The fans like home runs—and we have assembled a pitching staff to please our fans."



"I hate to complain, dear, but isn't 17 years awfully long for an austerity program?"

The presidential election last November 3 was, at most, the 15th most important balloting done in the country that day. The 14 more important instances of balloting were in the 14 states where the political class could not prevent people from voting on term limits; 14 chances, 14 victories. In 13 of the 14 states, term limits got more votes than Bill Clinton got. Term limits got more votes in 14 states than Ross Perot got in 50 states. This is the wave of the future, and it reflects the crash of the prestige of government. The Great Society initiatives which promised more than they delivered combined with Vietnam and Watergate to set the stage for the ravages that inflation wrought on the public's confidence in government. And that is where we stand today.

Ironically, American confidence in public institutions rose at only one point since 1963, and that is during the Presidency of Ronald Reagan. That is paradoxical, because he is the one who said in his inaugural address that government is not the solution, it is the problem. But people trusted government more, because they trusted the man who had a clear, candidly spoken agenda for government. This agenda was nothing less than to inspirit the country by changing many of its values.

Into the Political Future

I WOULD LIKE to suggest, for your consideration, a four-point agenda. The first is to change the political culture in every capital city, but most of all in Washington, with term limits. It is said that we need seasoned professionals in Washington or we won't have good government. I can again give you a baseball analogy. I serve on the board of the Baltimore Orioles. In 1988, the Orioles were a lot like Congress—they were old, expensive, and incompetent. They lost their first 21 games, and went on to lose 107 games that year. We on the Orioles board are not brain surgeons, but that winter we said, "Hey, we can lose 107 games with cheap rookies." The 1989 Orioles had the youngest team in baseball, the smallest payroll, and came within two pitches of winning the American League East. The moral of that story applies to the political class too.

The second item is an uncompromising re-affirmation of the proposition to which, as Lincoln said, we as a nation are "singularly dedicated." It is a proposition about the equal rights of individuals to strive individually to achieve happiness as individually defined. The very unity of our nation today is threatened by the balkanizing of the country into unassuageable grievance groups developing a racial, ethnic, and sexual spoils system.

Third, we must judge all social policies in terms of how they contribute to rapid economic growth. The welfare state is not going to go away, and it requires a rapidly growing economy to throw off revenues. But the very weight of the welfare state that requires the revenues is suffocating the private sector, which, at the end of the day, must pay the bills. Now, we cannot wait on the shrinking of the deficit—and I am a reluctant convert to this, tutored by Pete duPont and others—in part, because no one in Washington of either party has any particular incentive to shrink the deficit. The deficit is, after all, the principal tool of a career political class. It transfers wealth from the voiceless and voteless future to today's people, who are only too pleased to get or give a dollar's worth of government and be charged 79 cents for it. Therefore, a strategy must be found—consistent with the imperatives of the political

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culture that exists—to achieve sustainable economic growth.

Fourth—this I say with some passion—I would hope that the conservative movement would use our enforced leisure to come to an understanding that economic growth is not enough. We have learned rather a lot in the last thirty years about our most intractable problems, and we know that a rising tide will *not* raise all boats. This is, in part, because the problems afflicting vast portions of our urban society are problems of values, behavior, and character, not problems of inadequate economic opportunity. Look at what is happening to K–12 education. We are today graduating the first generation in American history less well educated than the generation that came before. We have been soothed, because we do not measure cognitive outputs through national testing. We instead judge our educational system through financial inputs. But the complacency that characterized this country for so long has happily been shattered.

I live in Montgomery County, where, a few years ago, someone ran for the school board saying, "If I am elected, the schools in Montgomery County will begin to produce Beethovens and Einsteins." I don't know how it is where you live, but in Montgomery County we would be very pleased if, upon leaving school, our children had *heard* of Beethoven and Einstein.

No Man's Land

BUT EVERYONE knows what the problem is that drives America's educational problems—it is the crack-up of the American family. I was recently at a school three miles due west of the Magnificent Mile in Chicago—a school 85 per cent black, 15 per cent Hispanic, with a heroic faculty struggling to give the children a chance. But the teachers never assign homework—because, they say, these children go home, all of them, to be parents to their siblings. It is, after all, a student body in which 85 per cent of the children come from homes with no fathers. As a result, we are experiencing in America today something without precedent in urban history: broad-scale social regression in the midst of rising prosperity. We are evolving a civilization we dare not evolve—a civilization in which the cities are important not primarily as centers of cultural and commercial vitality, but as burdens. And that means we cannot guarantee *the* first business of government, which is domestic tranquillity.

I was recently at the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta and was told that we passed a bleak milestone in America two years ago when, in at least two states, Texas and Louisiana, for the first time since the automobile became an instrument of mass transportation, more people died of gunshot wounds than died from vehicular accidents. We live in the only society in NATO, and that includes Turkey, in which children go to sleep at night in vast tracts of cities hearing gunfire. You may have noticed that around the time a school principal—by all reports a saintly man—in the Redhook section of Brooklyn was killed by a stray bullet while out searching for a child in that tough neighborhood, the *New York Times* ran an editorial the headline of which was, "Who Will Disarm the Thugs?" They were talking about *Somalia*. Somalia is not a pressing problem for America. Redhook is.

The problem has been put bravely by Pat Moynihan for 25 years, and he said it again recently: "From the wild Irish slums of the East Coast in the nineteenth century to south-central Los Angeles today, the lesson is clear. You have chaos when you have a large number of adolescent males who do not have fathers."

Mr. Clinton and the Democrats deplore what they see as income disparities developing in the 1980s. They propose to correct these by fiddling with the tax code. But the great disparities are driven by one pair of numbers: 18 per cent of all white children are born to single mothers; 66 per cent of all black children are. Until that is changed, America is going to become more dangerous. Consider all the other problems that come with those numbers, such as $5,500 a day in a neo-natal ward for a crack baby, or $60,000 a year in a public hospital for an AIDS victim in the last years of life.

Therefore, I ask one question: What does conservatism have to say to my friend Karen McCune? She's nine years old, 47 pounds, and full of life and bravery. She needs bravery because she lives in the Cabrini–Green housing project in Chicago. She goes to the Jenner School, named after the man who invented the smallpox vaccine. Three grade-schoolers, in the span of one year, were killed accidentally, getting from Cabrini–Green across the free-fire zone that is Chicago in those areas, into the Jenner School. Karen sleeps, she says, in a bed near a window except when the gunfire gets too fierce, and then she and her siblings go into the hall and hide. America is failing these people in a way that is simply intolerable. No political movement deserves to govern—not left, right, or center—that cannot begin to make life better for Karen McCune.

I think conservatism has the answers. The first answer is police—a lot of them—to disarm the thugs in this country. And then there are ways to begin to bring empowerment and a sense of dignity and choice and a stake in the community—good Madisonian language—to people living in these horrible places. Finding these ways is conservatism's challenge.

Most of all, it is conservatism's challenge to do whatever it does, and argue however it does, with a cheerful countenance. Americans do not like to be scolded. They want a smiling political class and they insist upon it. Barry Goldwater carried 5 states; Ronald Reagan carried 93 states in 48 months. Now there are a lot of reasons why Barry lost, but one of them is that he was perceived (wrongly, as everyone who knows him knows) as an angry man. Actually, Barry Goldwater was, in Richard Rovere's phrase, "the cheerful malcontent." The cheerfulness ought to be as apparent as the justifiable malcontentery of conservatism. Conservatives must find answers to these problems, but do so cheerfully, because Americans will reward that. □

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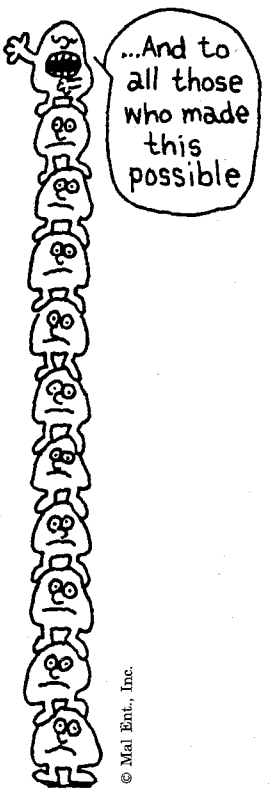

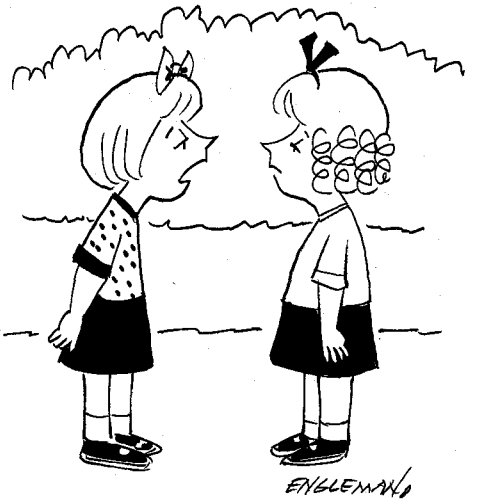

"If I become President I'm not going to let my husband sit in on Cabinet meetings."

It's the Entitlements, Stupid

Like the stripper whose routine
Keeps the act a tad too clean
As they holler, "Take it off!"
Mr. Clinton hears a cough
Getting louder in the wings
While he tentatively flings
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Critics eye the gown and hose.

W. H. VON DREELE

"This will go much more smoothly, Mr. Oglethorpe, if you stop calling me Mugsy."

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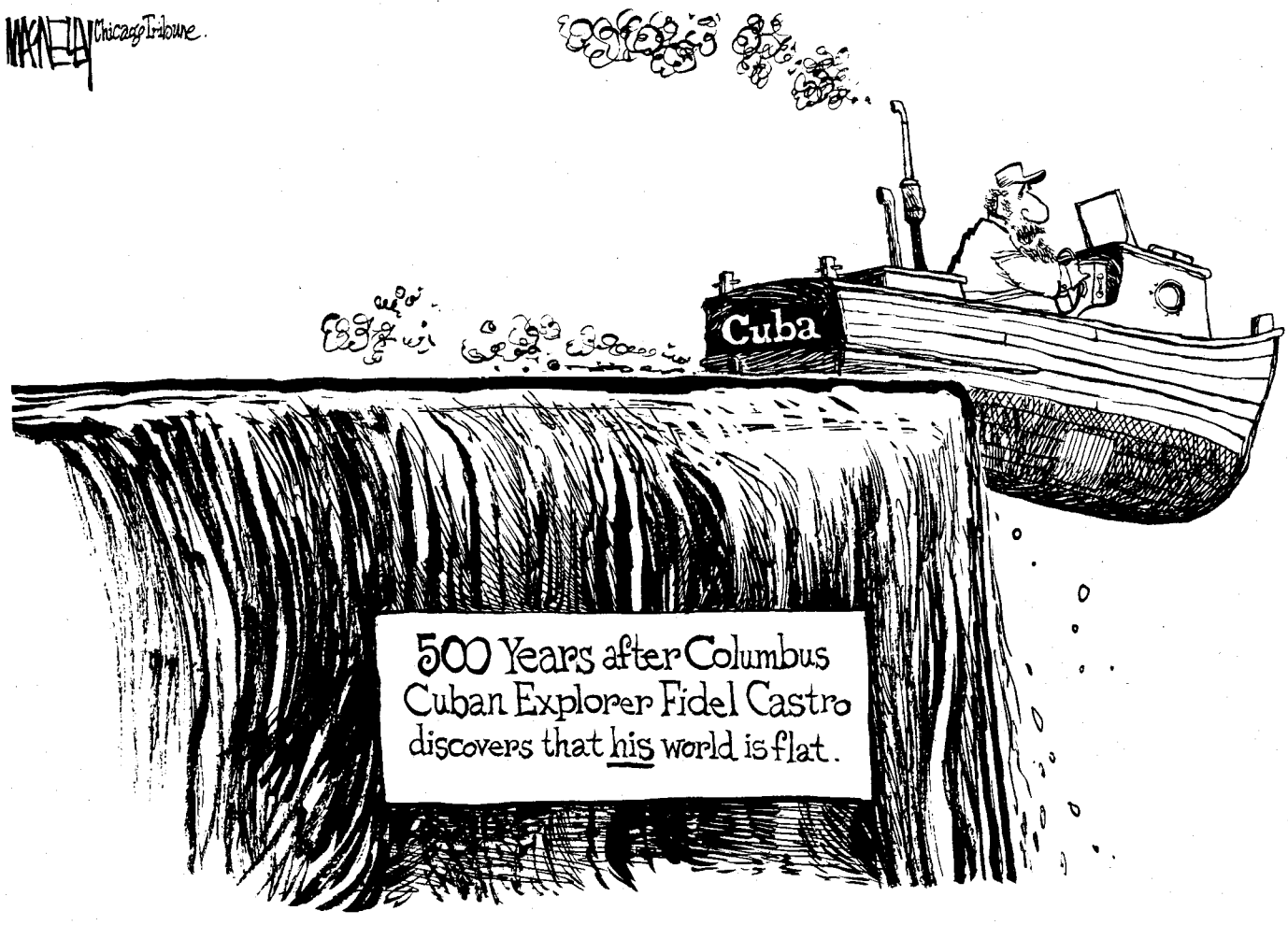

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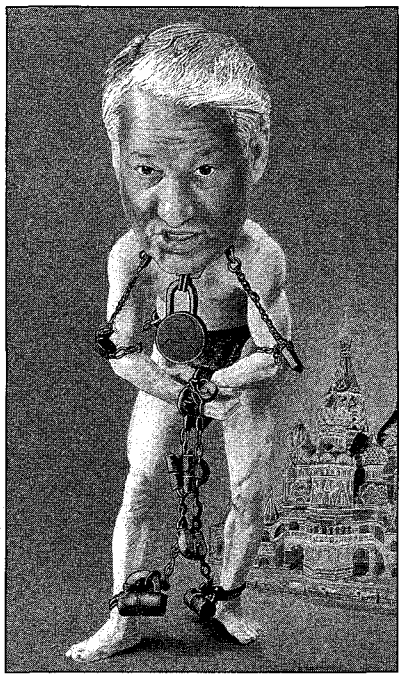

Russia-Watching

YELTSIN ROLLS THE DICE

Boris Yeltsin was proud of avoiding full-scale revolution in 1991. While the peaceful transition doubtless saved lives then, it was the basis for the far more dangerous situation today. Stay tuned.

JAMES SHERR

ONCE AGAIN, Russia is defying the Russia-watchers. It also may be defying reason. Reason would have dictated that the latest showdown between president and Parliament produce not presidential rule or the president's impeachment, but nothing at all. This seemed a likely, if dismaying, outcome because the correlation of forces between Russia's institutions—and, even more importantly, within them—makes the costs of the action Yeltsin took on March 20 not only uncertain, but incalculable. To be sure, the costs of stalemate have been intolerable. But in Russia the intolerable is often preferable to the unthinkable. By declaring "special rule," can Yeltsin turn the tables?

He certainly has been given every incentive to do so. The eighth (extraordinary) Congress of People's Deputies which met March 10–13 far surpassed the seventh in the indignities it inflicted upon him. Its chairman, Ruslan Khasbulatov, denounced as the "devil's work" the very accord that he had wrung from a humiliated Yeltsin at last December's Congress. What is more, in the weeks and days prior to the current Congress, Yeltsin retreated even further, intensifying his "dialogue" with the "centrist" Civic Union, redrafting his proposals for resolving the "constitutional crisis" and, finally, accepting a Congress agenda which, with good reason, he had initially opposed.

Khasbulatov's temerity is the very clue which reveals the enormousness of the gamble Yeltsin has taken. Whilst crass and swaggering, Khasbulatov is no blunderbuss. Like an earlier "dark horse" in Russian politics, Josef Stalin, he is expert at manipulating parliamentary procedure, assiduous in building support, and shrewd in judging power relationships. Yeltsin is now defying these power relationships and, through that defiance, altering them. The question is not simply whether he can survive, but whether he can alter them sufficiently to turn himself into an effective reformist leader.

Parliament's Premise

UNTIL March 20, Russia's so-called "centrists" were confident that they could divert reform into its antithesis, "stabilization." That confidence rested on a conviction that radical, free-market reform stood no chance of success in Russian conditions. From this premise, all their calculations have sprung.

Dispiriting as the premise might be, it has always possessed its own self-fulfilling logic. Success of reform did not depend upon Yeltsin in the past, and it will not do so in the future. Instead, it depends upon the existence of a political elite with the will and capacity to implement reformist policies. Today, there is no such elite, only what Yeltsin's opponents term a "coterie of advisors." This coterie is certainly supported by much of the country's creative intelligentsia, by a growing number of entrepreneurs, and by an unknown, but not minuscule, number of ordinary people. Yet these supporters do not begin to dominate Russia's political and economic structures.

This should not be surprising. For all its failings, the old regime was remarkably successful in depriving its opponents of the competence and experience required to manage an economy (not to speak of an army or a security service). Moreover, thanks to the swift and relatively painless collapse of the Soviet regime, most of the old Soviet elite survived intact. Thus, in most "echelons of administration," not only is there no sizable force to fill the vacuum, there is no vacuum to fill. In Yeltsin's own words, "We managed to prevent Russia from moving toward revolution" in 1991. His political weakness has stemmed from this very accomplishment. The pain Russia avoided in 1991 is the pain it suffers now.

In this skewed and schizophrenic situation, neither pre-revolutionary nor post-, the comparison made be-

Mr. Sherr is Lecturer in International Relations at Lincoln College, Oxford, and a Research Fellow at the Soviet Studies Research Center, Sandhurst.

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tween "dogmatic, intolerant" shock-therapists and "fanatical, impatient" Bolsheviks has resonance. And the claim that Parliament represents "the political forces in society" is not only plausible; it is a literal, if perverse, truth. For Yeltsin has had no mass movement, no representative institution, and no "power ministry" he could rely upon. And the people who elected Yeltsin will not be a mass movement (let alone a "political force") until they acquire representation and a medium of expression. To be sure, these people may be no more disposed to shock therapy than Russia's Parliament. But there is ample evidence of their willingness to support "firm government," and conclusive evidence that they revile the Congress and the Supreme Soviet. The vote which Yeltsin now decrees for April 25 might give them that medium of expression.

"Might" is still the operative word, however. Whilst Yeltsin can issue decrees, he cannot hold a referendum. Referendums, like the more straightforward "vote" now proposed, must be organized by local authorities. Yet Congress's moratorium on referendums, adopted by 580 votes to 221, was initially proposed by 72 local-authority heads. Those authorities can be counted upon to place every obstacle in Yeltsin's path unless he convinces them that he has already won before the vote takes place.

Yeltsin has not made his task easier by basing his decree on the "fundamental tenets of the constitution" which, in the words of Constitutional Court Chairman Valery Zorkin, it so plainly "crosses out." Unlike his comparison between himself and Kerensky (which was simply inept), Yeltsin's repeated pledges to observe the constitution could well prove misjudged. Those pledges will give the Court's impending (and almost inevitable) condemnation of Yeltsin more significance than it deserves.

These risks are trifles, however, compared to two others which Yeltsin has now decided to run. The first, and lesser, of these is ouster. The less united his apparatus and government, the greater that risk becomes. The defection of Vice President Rutskoi, announced concurrently with Yeltsin's own decree, brings his rivalry fully and perhaps dangerously into the open. Not to be discounted either is the defection of the chairman of

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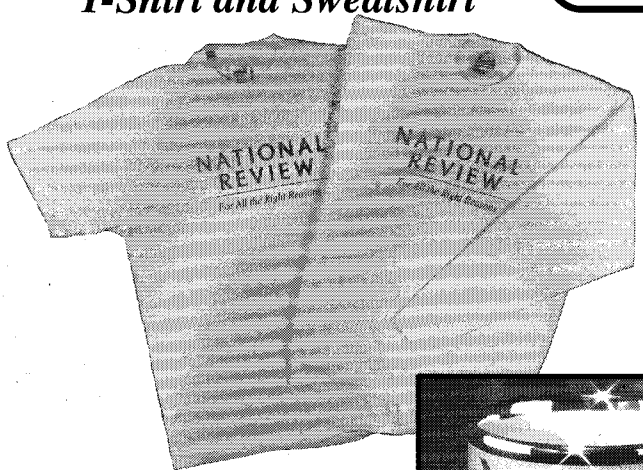

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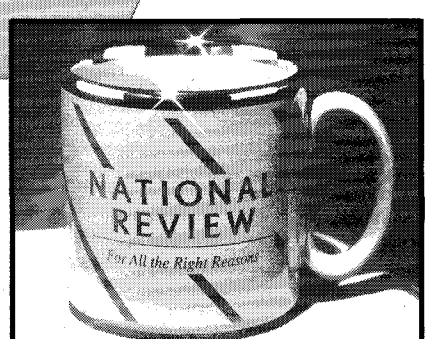

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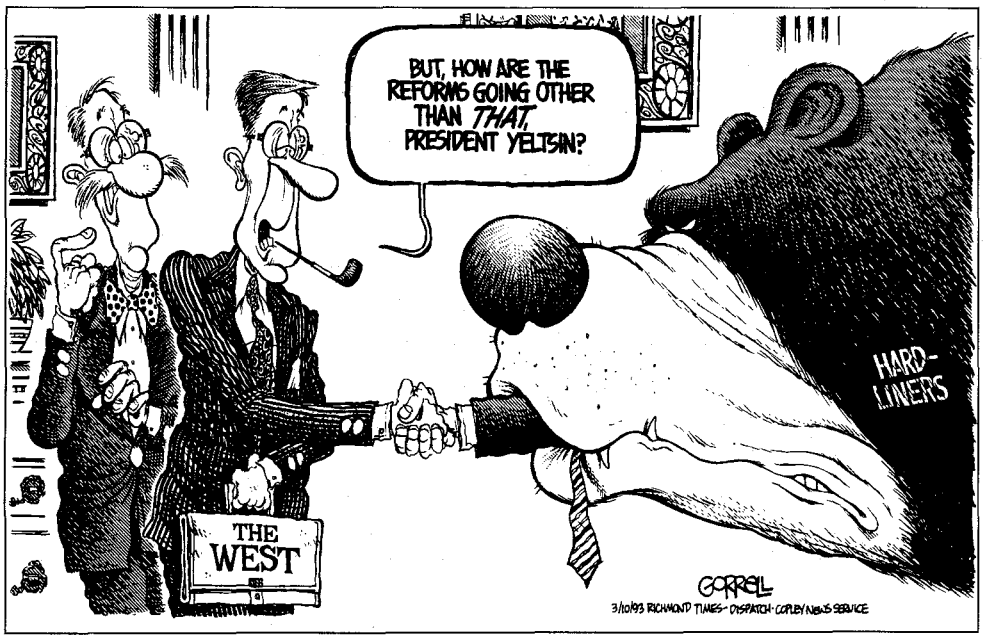
BUT, HOW ARE THE REFORMS GOING OTHER THAN THAT, PRESIDENT YELTSIN?
THE WEST
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Yeltsin's ever more powerful Security Council, Yuri Skokov. Like Rutskoi, Skokov is a proponent of firm government and an opponent of radical change. Like Rutskoi as well, he has a network of ties in Russia's "power ministries": the Ministries of Defense, Security, and Internal Affairs. For these reasons, Skokov was warmly proposed for the premiership by the same Congress which dismissed Yegor Gaidar last December.

Whilst the government itself is united behind Yeltsin, it is far from united in its aims. In fact, it is profoundly divided between those who, in the words of Deputy Prime Minister Boris Fedorov, wish to create an economy "where money is money" and those who wish "to save what existed before." Once put under stress, those policy divisions could easily become political ones. Yeltsin has used every public opportunity to back Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin—whom the seventh Congress virtually foisted upon him—but Chernomyrdin has never fully repaid the compliment. Whilst calling consistently for strong government, he was careful in the run-up to the Congress not to call for a strong president. Whilst pledging to support Yeltsin "with all his might" before the Congress, he expressed his gratitude to Congress the day after Yeltsin stormed out of it. When Yeltsin first hinted at drastic measures, Chernomyrdin expressed his opposition to them. Despite the government's statement of support, Chernomyrdin still looks like a figure with a foot in each camp.

The second and greater risk which Yeltsin faces is armed conflict. Here the immediate danger, clashes in Moscow, camouflages the greater one: clashes with Russia's ever more autonomous regions. That regional autonomy is merely the logical completion of a sequence which began under Gorbachev: the erosion of the Communist Party as a mechanism of control and the consequent unraveling of the "command-administrative system" in the economy. When market mechanisms failed to fill the vacuum, regional authorities were obliged to do so, providing perquisites, privileges, and the bare necessities of life. Over time, the obligation became a prerogative. It also provided a new lease on life for former Communists who found that they were doing very well out of the Soviet collapse.

Far from democratizing power, that collapse simply enabled them to decentralize it and privatize it amongst themselves. Where once they "allocated resources" to state-owned factories, today they allocate licenses and permits allowing businesses to operate. Now as in the past, they have an intimate (i.e., corrupt) relationship with these businesses, which, in turn, are largely owned by those who managed them before. For these elites, the transformation of bureaucratic into financial power is the essence of "economic reform," and they believe it should go no further.

Since local authorities determine whether people have jobs, housing, and food, the center counts for little. Regions that have taken off (like Nizhny Novgorod) and regions that have stood still (like Tatarstan), have felt equally free to ignore the center's laws or devise their own. With a staff of "only twenty thousand," the Russian state procurator admits that he is virtually powerless. In these conditions, Yeltsin's decrees have been little more than conversation pieces and his "presidential representatives" little more than nuisances. In time, most of them have come to an "arrangement" with those who are really in charge.

The convening of a conference of regional leaders in Novosibirsk on February 19 represented a critical maneuver in Khasbulatov's strategy to defeat Yeltsin at the eighth Congress. The motion to declare a moratorium on referendums and elections was proposed by these same leaders. It is no wonder that they view Parliament as "theirs" and have done everything to fend off government attacks on its financial prerogatives. In 1992 over a trillion rubles in subsidies was extended to regions and territories and three trillion to enterprises facing bankruptcy. Any presidential rule that failed to stop this hemorrhage would be unworthy of the name. Yet the attempt to stop it could produce turbulence and even upheaval.

What Will the Army Do?

THIS possibility is sufficient reminder that whilst Presidents can declare states of emergency, only armies can impose them. Had the "power ministers" declared they would oppose Yeltsin, then he would not have acted. Yet what kind of support are they offering, and what kind of support can they deliver?

To all appearances, Russia's minister of defense, Army General Pavel Grachev, has now placed himself squarely on Yeltsin's side. Yet during the previous weeks and months, Grachev warned repeatedly that the army would not be "dragged into political recklessness and bloody chaos." In practice, this bold and often tactless minister has been careful to distance himself from the president who appointed him. Before the latest confrontation, he referred to the Army as "a most important instrument *of the*

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state," as "the guarantor of stability *in society*"; and he insisted that "the Army will go with *the people*" in the event of disorder. No mention of presidents here. Given this record, his pledge on March 20 to support the "principles of the constitution" preserves an unhealthy ambiguity.

Beneath the tone of aloofness, Grachev has anxieties aplenty. It is fine for him to say, as he has regularly, that the army is "absolutely reliable." But reliable for what? Where the task is combating "national extremists"—as in Moldova, Osetia, and Tajikistan—the army has not only proved reliable, it has often taken the initiative. It is the Army that announced the suspension of troop withdrawals from the Baltic states last October and Yeltsin who followed. It is Grachev who appointed Yeltsin's enemy, Aleksandr Lebed, to command the 14th Army in Moldova, and it is very far from certain that the Army would prove "reliable" if Yeltsin ordered them to leave.

At present, Yeltsin is asking only for the Army's neutrality. But if regions defy him—not to speak of courts, banks and local "militia" (police)—he could soon be asking for more. The August 1991 coup testifies to how potentially divisible the Army is. In 1993, even more than in 1991, unit commanders are the focus of military loyalty. Grachev and his deputies are not universally popular with these commanders, many of whom now enjoy profitable connections with the local authorities they might be asked to repress. Although the military's "right" to engage in commercial activities, ceded to them by Gorbachev in 1991, has since been revoked by Yeltsin, this genie has no wish to return to its bottle. Given these realities, "bloody chaos"—in the British, if not the Russian sense—could be the likely result if the Army is asked to "restore order."

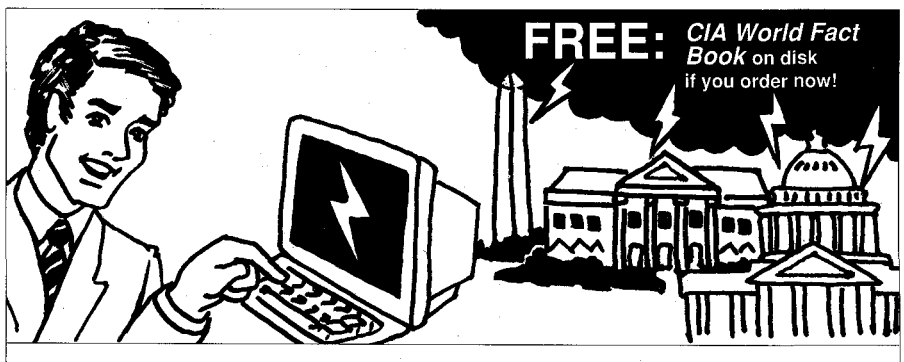
Similar concerns must be raised about the support proffered by the minister of security, Viktor Barannikov. With 180,000 heavily armed Border Troops at its disposal, the Ministry of Security (MB), like the KGB before it, is an army in itself. What is more, it retains full control of counter-intelligence functions within Russian Armed Forces subordinated to the Ministry of Defense, thus affording it considerable knowledge of the Army's plans and sentiments.

But the roots of MB/KGB power stem from two far less conspicuous factors. First, it possesses a trove of information about those who hold power and those who oppose them. In a post-revolutionary state governed by a pre-revolutionary elite this is a very sharp weapon indeed. Second, it has always possessed privileged knowledge about the once illegal "second economy" and, even in Soviet times, privileged connections with it. Some two and a half years before he extended the privilege to the Army, Gorbachev granted the KGB (and Komsomol) the right to go into business. This right is simply unrevokable. In the provinces at least, the organs of State Security have no reason to jump merely because Yeltsin says Jump.

If Barannikov himself is Yeltsin's ally, there is no reason to suppose that he is Yeltsin's man. His conception of "state security" is not only politically reactionary, but economically retrograde. What is more, his refusal to allow the State Procuracy access to KGB archives suggests no small degree of independence—as did his refusal to back Yeltsin's (widely rumored) proposal to mount a presidential *Putsch* last October. Although conditions then were less desperate than today, Yeltsin was stronger then. It is only prudent to suppose that Barannikov's support will come at a price. It is also prudent to ask whether he will hedge his bets.

The Western Front

THE same question is being asked about Western leaders. Many are ducking it. Whilst that is the wrong answer, it is also the wrong question. Until he decreed "special rule," Yeltsin was not threatened with ouster, only with impotence. The issue today is not Yeltsin, but the conditions which create that impotence. Of all these conditions—the collapse of state power, the fragmentation of institutions—the most important is a balance of forces unfavorable to radical change. Whilst this balance is likely to worsen if Yeltsin fails, there is no guarantee that his success will reverse it. Indeed, to succeed against Parliament, Yeltsin could well be forced into further accommodations with the very forces—industry, the Army, and the Ministry of Security—that seek "stabilization" rather than change.



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It is possible that the West is too morally and intellectually handicapped to respond to this prospect. Morally, because it has spent the months since August 1991 applauding events rather than shaping them. Intellectually, because it is the *déformation professionelle* of presidents and prime ministers to dwell upon the qualities of foreign leaders rather than the character of foreign countries.

Whilst Clinton's support for Yeltsin is a laudable step, it is not a policy. A policy would be a coherent set of measures which aimed, over the long term, and in the modest ways open to us, to undermine the foundations of Communist power in Russia. These ways *will* be modest, and the tribulations of mighty Germany wrestling with the comparatively minor travails of the ex-GDR ought to be both humbling and instructive.

The first measure must be vigorous and tangible backing for those *outside Russia* who have largely emancipated themselves from Communist elites and structures. The psychological boost to reformers *inside Russia* from economic success elsewhere should not be underestimated. Yet because there was more concern about Russia's failure than about Eastern Europe's fragile success, "former" Communists have now returned to power in Slovakia and Lithuania. This will do nothing for Russia and, in the words of a Lithuanian diplomat, will merely persuade many that "the Iron Curtain is moving west again."

Within Russia itself, we must proceed from the assumption that the end user of aid is not "Yeltsin," but tens of thousands of largely unreconstructed power-brokers in hundreds of largely unreformed power structures. This does not argue for a "hands off" policy, but it argues for a discriminating policy which focuses on what *might* be done rather than on what ought to be done. In Russian conditions, beneficial aid will be more labor-intensive than capital-intensive, and it will need to be micro-managed. The diversion of German-financed "military housing" to civilians on the payroll of Russian local authorities should stand as a cautionary tale.

In contrast, nearly all forms of macro-economic assistance to Russia are bound to be regressive. The "need" for such funds arises not because of shock therapy, but because of its absence. Russia's 600,000 unemployed (in contrast to Britain's three million) are proof that there has been more anesthetic than shock: a point that Deputy Prime Minister Fedorov confirms when he notes that "not a single enterprise has gone bankrupt; not a single director has been sacked."

The danger of providing such assistance must be clearly understood. That danger is not that it will be "wasted," but that it will prolong the lives of the elites, institutions, and practices that keep Russia in its infirm state. Placed in the hands of those who are now in charge, such aid will only deepen the divide between haves and have-nots and persuade ordinary people that we are in bed with their oppressors. The greatest danger is not—as is so often portrayed—that we deny Russia aid and disillusion her, but that we assist her and disillusion her, convincing her people, not for the first time in Russian history, that Western models and values are irrelevant to her predicaments.

In politics, the long-term can always wait, and the short-term is always imperative. Nevertheless, had Western governments possessed a long-term policy in December 1991, it is possible that they would have had short-term remedies now. Today they have few. As a result, history may be made without our participation, and it may even be reversed. However Yeltsin's battles turn out, we will be ill equipped to face the future unless we force ourselves to look beyond them. □

Mr. Clinton's Reforms

BREAKING THE BANKS

For a while there, it looked as if the new Administration was taking a Reaganesque turn. Look again.

ROBERT STOWE ENGLAND

BILL CLINTON embraced at least one Reaganesque idea at the Little Rock economic summit: banking deregulation. In a small way. Briefly. The tale of his retreat is instructive both about the depth of the banking system's problems and about the Clinton modus operandi.

The idea of banking deregulation came from William H. Brandon, the president and CEO of an Arkansas bank, and a longtime acquaintance of Bill Clinton. In Brandon's view, duplicative and contradictory regulations passed in the wake of the savings & loan crisis were the source of a major credit crunch. He estimated that these regulations were cutting lending by some 4 per cent despite generally low interest rates. Four per cent of the $2.15 trillion in total bank lending amounts to $86 billion—a not inconsiderable sum. A prudent streamlining of these regulations would, Brandon reasoned, repair banks' ability to lend to business and thus give the U.S. economy a significant stimulus without increasing the deficit—a factor that made the proposal particularly appealing to President-elect Clinton.

The chiefs of the country's six major banking associations followed up Brandon's foot in the White House door with a long letter to the President-elect in December advocating nine substantive reforms. The bankers told President-elect Clinton that the problem could not be solved without new legislation to undo the accumulated damage done by Congress since 1989. The Financial Institutions Reform and Regulatory Enforcement Act of 1989, the crime bill of 1990, and the FDIC Improvement Act of 1991 had, among them, imposed a formal and inflexible lending process on banks that has had dire effects on their ability to make loans to small business. Since small business is the main source of job creation, this would help explain why the recovery is producing so few jobs.

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How exactly have the new regulations had this malign effect? First, explains Diane Casey, executive director of the Independent Bankers Association of America, old-fashioned "character" lending "has to a large extent disappeared." Bank examiners have interpreted the laws as requiring full and multiple appraisals of collateral, as opposed to allowing bankers, particularly at small local banks, to make risk assessment based on years of experience in the community. The cost of appraisals, and indirect costs of the time and paperwork, are proportionately greater for small loans, which are therefore less likely to be made.

The new regulations also wreak havoc with existing loans: because the rules concerning collateral are so strict, banks have been forced to declare loans non-performing even though no payments have been missed, simply because the market price of the asset securing the loan has temporarily dropped. Again, this affects small-business loans disproportionately, because they are disproportionately secured by homes and other real estate, whose value is depressed in today's economy.

Finally, the regulations have forced banks to increase their capital ratios drastically. This obviously reduces their ability to lend, and loans to small businesses are among the first areas bankers have cut back on, both because a banker must take care of his larger customers first and because it has become so hard to defend small-business loans to examiners.

Indeed, the new regulations and the change in the Washington *Zeitgeist* have turned bank examiners into unforgiving villains in the minds of bankers. "Every loan you make, you know the regulators are looking over your shoulder," says Kenneth Guenther, a lobbyist for the Independent Bankers Association of America. Bankers face fines at rates up to $1 million per day and the freezing of their personal and business assets if they are found to have violated an intricate set of rules and procedures.

Depressed Area

IT SHOULD come as no surprise, then, that since last June bank lending to business, traditionally the profit center of the banking industry, has fallen below bank lending to the government. This gives America a Third World lending profile.

The trend has been under way since 1990, as bank lending to the government has grown at 25 per cent a year, while lending to business has stagnated. By last June, investment in government securities (at $610.7 billion) had surpassed loans to business, which then stood at $604.6 billion. As of this January, bank lending to business had slipped slightly, to $601.3 billion, while bank investment in U.S. Government securities had reached $657.4 billion, according to the Federal Reserve.

The current profile is also remarkably similar to that of the latter years of the Great Depression, according to Bert Ely, a banking consultant in Alexandria, Virginia. Then as now the banking industry was overcapitalized, loaded with excess liquidity, and not lending. In the late 1930s bankers were "scared stiff of bank runs," Ely says. Today they are scared stiff of bank examiners.

The reign of regulatory terror could have been halted almost as soon as it began: as of 1991, the Bush Administration and majorities in Congress favored true bank reform—the opposite of the regulations cited above. Three men have been standing in the way: House Banking Chairman Henry Gonzalez (D., Tex.), a populist throwback to the Thirties who believes bankers are by definition out to exploit the "little guy"; Senate Banking Chairman Don Riegle (D., Mich.), who has made a point of supporting regulators to the hilt ever since his role in the Keating Five scandal became public; and House Energy and Commerce Chairman John Dingell (D., Mich.), who holds a quasi-religious belief that banks caused the Great Depression and must be tightly regulated. (Dingell's father was a principal author of the Glass–Steagall Act of 1933, which forcibly separated investment banking from commercial banking.)

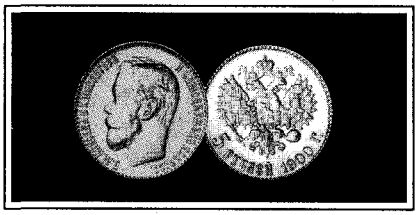
In 1991, Dingell almost singlehandedly transformed the Bush–Brady bank reform into the FDIC Improvement Act. Gonzalez and Riegle, meanwhile, are responsible for the ascendancy of Charles A. Bowsher, chief of the General Accounting Office (an arm of Congress), as an unofficial super bank regulator. Over the last year Bowsher's influence on bank examiners has probably become greater than that of the four banking and thrift regulatory agencies (the Federal Reserve, the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency, the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, and the Office of Thrift Supervision) put together.

Indeed, so far from deregulation, what the Terror Trio of Gonzalez, Riegle, and Bowsher want is micromanagement of banking from Washington. This year, for example, Congress is likely to reconsider allegations of racial bias in lending. These allegations are based on the flawed studies of Alicia Munnell [see box, page 42], the left-wing former research director of the Boston Fed who has been appointed under secretary for economic policy at the Treasury Department. It is not beyond the realm of possibility that Congress will decide to force banks to make risky loans to alleged victims of discrimination.

In any case, when the trio heard that their new President was considering deregulation, they went into action. First, on January 18, Gonzalez asked the Congressional Budget Office to prepare a study on bank lending to

Mr. England is a Washington-area writer on financial and political matters.

The Last Gold Coin of the Romanovs



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small business with the scarcely hidden agenda of proving that there was no problem. Within three weeks, the lapdogs at CBO, which is still straightfacedly referred to in press accounts as "non-partisan," released a hastily written staff memorandum, "Regional Analysis of Bank Lending." The CBO memo dutifully offered evidentce that severe new regulation actually could be improving bank lending to business. The central evidence

Racism at Work?

EVERYONE has heard of neoconservatism and neoliberalism, but the real issue in America today is neosocialism. Classical socialism called for direct state ownership of the means of production, distribution, and exchange. Neosocialism just aims at political control. Socialism claimed to be more efficient. Neosocialism claims to be more equitable. Above all, neosocialism professes to combat "racism," since this magic word cows all opposition. Apparent neosocialist objective of the season: commandeering the banking system and forcing it to subsidize key client constituencies.

And it's not going to be easy to stop. Late last year, the *Wall Street Journal*'s news pages carried five campaigning stories in eight weeks alleging that residential mortgage lenders were discriminating against minorities. The *Journal*'s evidence, raw rejection rates, was essentially worthless because it took no account of standard credit considerations like net worth and income. But then the *Journal* reported a Federal Reserve Bank of Boston study of a sample of mortgage applications that did correct for these criteria. And it found minorities were still rejected at a (slightly) higher rate. This difference, the Boston Fed concluded, could only be due to racism.

The ecstasy that greeted this conclusion ("Definitive—changes the landscape," claimed the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency) was always absurd. The Boston Fed study itself noted that rejected minority applications on average had "poorer objective qualifications" so that "a systematic bias in mortgage lending is very difficult to document." For that matter, Asian-Americans were rejected *less* often than whites.

At *Forbes*, Leslie Spencer and I got interested in a conspicuous omission from all these mortgage-discrimination stories: default rates. Had the Boston Fed study corrected for those?

Ah yes, said Alicia Munnell, then the Boston Fed's Research Director. Not of course in the study's sample, which was too recent, but by looking at default rates in black and white Census tracts. And they were equal!

Miss Munnell apparently assumed this meant blacks and whites were equal credit risks. But it didn't. Those black mortgage holders were, by definition, the ones who had already passed the mortgage approval process—which had presumably rejected the usual higher proportion of blacks on the way. Instead, the fact that black and white default rates were equal meant that the market was working. Mortgage lenders were somehow able to weed out the extra black credit risks, reducing defaults down to the same, apparently acceptable, rate as for whites.

"[That] is a sophisticated point," Miss Munnell told us. Our impression was she just hadn't thought of it. "I do believe discrimination occurs," she said. But she now readily conceded, "I do not have evidence . . . no one has evidence."

They don't have evidence, but they sure have convictions. Our report of the Boston Fed study's fatal flaw appeared before Christmas. Perhaps the Associated Press's Rob Wells was too seasonally merry to adjust his version of Boston Fed ecstasy that appeared December 27. But this hardly applies to the *Wall Street Journal*'s Albert R. Karr and John R. Wilke, or the *New York Times*'s John H. Cushman, whose uncritical stories appeared on February 26 and March 7 respectively. Only the fact that Miss Munnell was nominated for a Treasury job, and syndicated columns by Llewellyn Rockwell and Paul Craig Roberts, saved our story from the memory hole.

Forbes did receive a letter from one Stephen M. Cross, deputy controller for compliance management, comptroller of the currency. Significantly, Cross made no effort to defend the claim that the Boston Fed study proved discrimination. Instead, he fell back to the position that we hadn't proved it *didn't* exist. And he offered this fantastic rationalization: Racism may be preventing qualified blacks from getting mortgages, tending to lower their default rate. But simultaneously, it may be causing premature foreclosure on black mortgage holders, tending to raise their default rate! The two forces may miraculously balance out!! Which would result in a black default rate equal to that of whites!!!

This is indeed logically possible. It is also *logically* possible that the equal default rate is caused by green goblins stealing blacks' application forms. With a little imaginative effort of this sort, it will always be possible to allege racism.

Actually, of course, Miss Spencer and I never claimed to show that mortgage discrimination did not exist. We merely said the Boston Fed had failed to prove that it did. But Cross and his ilk do have this problem: The hypothesis that racism does not affect mortgage lending yields a prediction—equal default rates. This turns out to be true. Their alternative hypothesis, that racism is at work, implies unequal default rates. This turns out to be false. The racism hypothesis can only be sustained by ridiculous rationalizations. Accordingly, the presumption of normal scientific inquiry would be against it.

Neosocialism, however, is not science. What's going on here is a witch-hunt, conducted by the religious Left and aided by key elements of the civil service. The innocent victims will be the banking system, the savers of America, the economy, and ultimately liberty itself. The craven banking industry cannot be expected to resist. It is time conservatives stopped piously chanting about capital-gains tax cuts and woke up to the fact that their capital is under attack.

—PETER BRIMELOW

Mr. Brimelow, an NR *contributing editor, is a senior editor at* Forbes.

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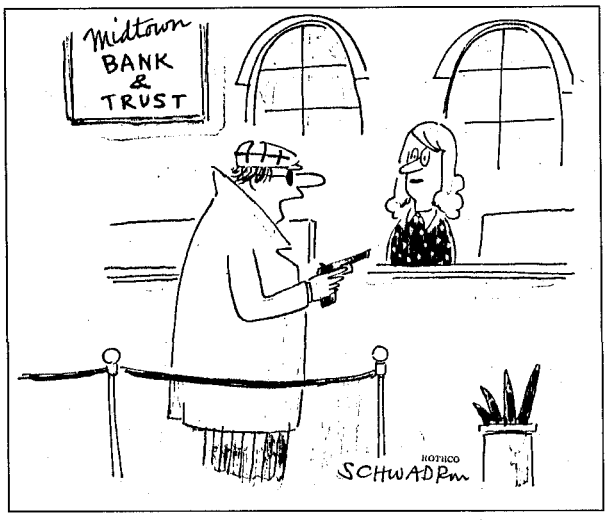
was a finding that healthy banks—ones that had managed to meet the new, higher capitalization requirements—had increased overall lending in the last year by 3 per cent.

Sadly, no one read the fine print. In fact, CBO reported a 1.4 per cent *decrease* in commercial and industrial lending, the main business category. The 3 per cent figure includes all other lending, including a 9.9 per cent growth in real estate lending. Moreover, the CBO simply ignored the overall low level of lending to business—which normally rises sharply during a recovery—and discounted the disturbing shift of lending from business to government. The memo was technically correct in remarking on recent improvements in bank earnings, but this is unquestionably a result of the decline in the interest rates that banks must pay their depositors, which has allowed most banks to profit off a larger spread. (The improvement is also not permanent: if interest rates begin to rise, banks could suffer a sharp reversal of fortune as their huge holdings in government bonds decline in real value.)

The next step came February 17, when Gonzalez brought Bowsher before his committee to deliver an attack on the *laxity* of bank examiners. Bowsher criticized examiners' use of discretion and their resulting wide variety of responses to apparently similar problems and faulted regulatory agencies' use of guidelines rather than mandatory minimum standards. Terming the present system "a weak regulatory system," he suggested Congress consider legislation to *increase* the level of regulatory oversight. The testimony, and Gonzalez's friendly response to the witness, was a signal that the Banking Committee would not tolerate a loosening of regulations.

The final blow came in a closed-door meeting between the staffs of the House and Senate Banking Committees and the nominees for U.S. comptroller and under secretary of the Treasury for domestic affairs, Eugene A. Ludwig and Frank N. Newman. According to a source close to the Treasury Department, the staffers told the nominees in no uncertain terms that legislative regulatory relief "is not going to happen." After the meeting,



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"Credit it to my account!"

Treasury officials leaked the news that President Clinton had backed off the idea of seeking new legislation. A week later Clinton began telling businessmen simply that he would pressure regulators to allow banks to do more character lending.

The Unveiling

HAVING considered bank reform for months, however, Clinton would have been too embarrassed not to come up with something. Accordingly, on March 10 he unveiled a "plan" in which the four federal banking agencies would loosen regulation and thereby generate "a flow of billions of dollars of economic stimulus that doesn't cost the American taxpayer one red cent." Senator Riegle attended the announcement; Representative Gonzalez declined the President's invitation.

In classic Clinton style, the package acknowledges the concerns of virtually every party involved—but doesn't propose any real change. In a joint statement released at Clinton's press conference, the four agencies admitted the need for "a program directed at dealing with problems of credit availability, especially for small and medium-sized businesses." The policy statement recognized many of the problems with the current system, including its bias against character loans, foolish treatment of real-estate collateral, and an ineffective appeal process—but it also sent signals of concern about "discriminatory lending practices" and "uniform examination policies." The main initiative is a plan

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to allow banks to reduce documentation on an as yet unspecified amount of loans, the ceiling on each loan also to follow.

This may create a small window for some small-business lending. But the initiative does not—and, as an administrative rather than a legislative approach, *cannot*—remove the accumulated regulation that has led banks to avoid character lending. Bank examiners will continue to follow the clear intent of the FDIC Improvement Act, which at bottom prohibits such lending. Though top regulators can urge discretion on bank examiners, "It's easier to unleash the dogs than to call them off," in the words of Kenneth Guenther. Diane Casey views it as "an excellent first step," since it urges bank examiners to be more reasonable, but adds that it will not generate a surge in lending to small businesses: that would require new legislation. Forget about that $86-billion stimulus. □

The Child-Welfare System

THE REAL ABUSE

What are the child-welfare agencies doing to stop child abuse? The reverse.

SETH FARBER

MARY JACKSON is a 40-year-old black woman who has worked for 15 years as a school crossing guard. She has been the primary caretaker of her three grandchildren, aged five, eight, and ten, because her daughter—the children's mother—has spent much of the time on drugs.

When one of the children was taken to the hospital for pneumonia, Mrs. Jackson was charged by the Child Welfare Administration with "medical neglect," and all three children were taken away. Most cases involving allegations of neglect end there—with the children in the custody of the CWA. But Mrs. Jackson fought back. She was not guilty of the charge, and she had evidence to prove it.

Indeed, after her first appearance in court, an extremely unusual thing happened: the court-appointed psychologist recommended that her grandchildren be returned to her. And he publicly disagreed with the child-welfare bureaucracy. He wrote, "In contrast to CWA reports that Ms. Jackson has not provided medical attention to these children, she pulled from her purse detailed copies of medical reports of examinations and vaccinations." These records, dating back to the time of each child's birth, documented every medical visit made and every immunization shot received.

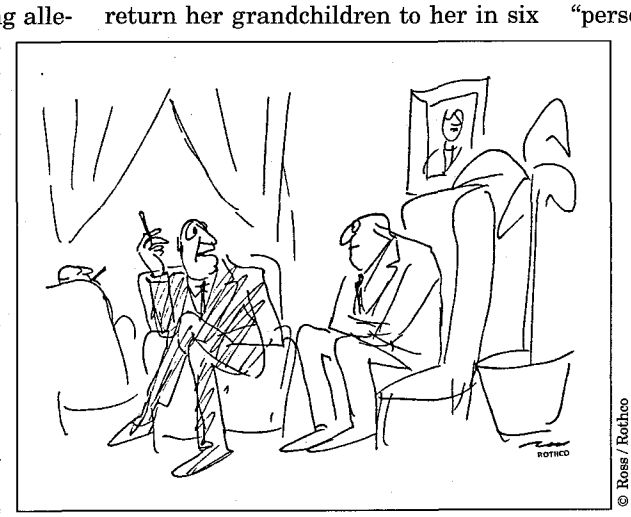
But the child-welfare bureaucracy doesn't give up that easily. They offered Mrs. Jackson a deal: if she pleaded guilty to neglect they would return her grandchildren to her in six months. Her court-appointed lawyer advised her to do so, and she did. (This sort of plea-bargaining is quite common in the child-welfare bureaucracy.)

When the six months were nearly up, the CWA went back on its word and insisted that Mrs. Jackson go for another "psychological evaluation." This time she was examined by a black psychiatrist. Perhaps because he was black, Mrs. Jackson felt that she could confide in him. She failed to realize that he was a child-welfare bureaucrat above all else. She described one of the figures in the Rorschach inkblot test (these tests have no scientific validity) as "a hole trying to trap somebody . . . like they trapped me and I fell right into that hole." She also said, later in the interview, "People lead you on, you do certain things and they use it against you." Far from indicating some abnormal mental state, these were perfectly accurate descriptions of what had happened to Mrs. Jackson. But the psychiatrist inferred from her responses that she was suffering from a "paranoid personality disorder." He also stated in his report that she was guilty of medical neglect, although he had access to the psychologist's report that had already refuted this charge.

The psychiatrist wrote, "She tends to be more obvious or intense in expressing feelings than most adults, and there's a capacity for very maladaptive behavior when aroused. Mrs. Jackson is currently depressed, in a rage, feels 'all alone,' feels 'everything has been taken away' from her." This is a standard tactic among mental-health bureaucrats: to construe a mother's distress as a "symptom" of a "personality disorder," rather than as a natural response to the abduction of her children.

The psychiatrist had two recommendations: first, that "Mrs. Jackson not be given custody of her grandchildren due to her disturbed thinking and flawed judgment"; second, that she be provided with therapy "to help her cope and adjust to the loss of her grandchildren." (Presumably, this was a slip of the pen. Usually the bureaucrat is not candid enough to admit that what the client is suffering from is the removal of her children.)

When I entered the case, *pro bono*, I wrote a three-page letter



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"When you think about it, peace has no meaning in a peaceful world."

Dr. Farber is a psychologist and the author of Madness, Heresy, and the Rumor of Angels, *due out later this spring from Open Court Press.*

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debunking the psychiatrist's evaluation. I was prepared to testify as an expert witness on Mrs. Jackson's behalf. After the CWA read my letter, however, it decided to release the children—not to Mrs. Jackson, but to her daughter, who had just graduated from a drug-rehabilitation program. This was the rare case in which everyone is satisfied: the Jacksons, because their family was reunited; the CWA, because it could resolve the problem without admitting its error.

Amina Mannan is another black woman who was falsely accused of medical neglect. Two of her three children were placed in the care of her former mother-in-law (Mrs. Mannan is divorced); the third child was placed in foster care.

Mrs. Mannan was rebellious and disturbed the bureaucrats by her "uncooperative" behavior. The family-court judge ordered that she be sent, against her will, for a "psychological evaluation" and kept in a mental hospital for two weeks. Although this procedure is obviously a violation of a person's constitutional rights, the state uses the urgency of child-welfare cases as its excuse. The psychologist who examined Mrs. Mannan wrote that although she presented herself in a "relatively well-adjusted manner in highly structured situations, where she has a general idea of what's expected from her," she would do less well in an "unstructured" situation, where she would exert "poor impulse control." She lacks "adequate coping resources" and may respond to stress in ways that are "highly variable and emotionally charged."

These are standard phrases used by virtually all mental-health bureaucrats who do evaluations. In Mrs. Mannan's case, the assertion was particularly ludicrous. This was not a structured situation: Mrs. Mannan had been abducted and placed in a mental hospital where she was told she must remain for two weeks! As I wrote in my report, "How could anyone have a good idea of 'what was expected of her' by mad psychologists who evidently regard the violation of one's constitutional rights and the unlimited exercise of power by mental-health professionals as part of the normal course of events? The fact that she was able to remain restrained in such a situation indicates to me that she had not 'inadequate,'" as the examining psychologist claims, "but highly developed 'coping skills.'"

The psychologist did not make a recommendation. However, his nebulous but ominous warnings would lead anyone who trusted his expertise to be reluctant to return Mrs. Mannan's children to her. The psychiatrist he worked with did not make a recommendation concerning the children, but she did recommend that "the patient be in individual therapy because of the emotional distress she's experiencing due to her housing conditions and a chronically sick child." The letter concluded, "An appointment has been made for Ms. Mannan to attend the Rockaway Mental Health Clinic. We will give the patient the date and the time of her appointment."

Despite a four-year battle in family court, and numerous letters written by myself, by Dr. Monty Weinstein, director of the Family Therapy Institute of New York City, and by Beryl Murray, co-director of the Sickle Cell Anemia Foundation (Mrs. Mannan's 13-year-old daughter has sickle-cell anemia), Mrs. Mannan has still not recovered custody of her children. The daughter

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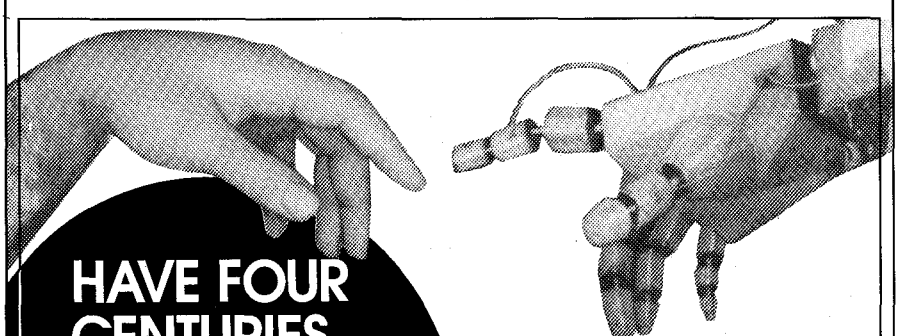

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in foster care (the one with sickle-cell anemia) has run away four times and returned to her mother. Each time the court sent the police to separate them again.

Will and Norma Lynne Griever are a white middle-class couple in their late thirties with three children. The children were taken away from them in March of 1990 and Mrs. Griever was said to be a dangerous mother. What had she done to warrant this? She had made the mistake of going to a mental-health clinic and asking for family therapy after her 12-year-old son, Jeremy, had been sexually abused by a neighbor. Jeremy had also been sexually abused one time several years previously by a stranger.

Instead of family therapy, Mrs. Griever was given a "psychological evaluation." Her distress was said to be a symptom of a "borderline personality disorder," and the report concluded, "One, Lynne most definitely needs psychological and possible psychiatric intervention. While she's saying that she wants treatment now I believe the prognosis is only fair if she can work in a therapeutic relationship for a long enough period of time to address some of the underlying depression and disordered thoughts. However, her ideas and values are fairly rigid and will not be easy to alter.

"It seems clear that much outside support will be necessary for an extended period of time if Lynne is to continue caring for her 13-year-old son. It appears she has not been able to protect him from being molested on several [*sic*] occasions in the past and may, indeed, place the child in danger because of her flawed judgment at times."

This report became the justification for the removal of the Grievers' children by the family-court judge. Lynne and her husband had the money to hire a competent attorney, although they depleted most of their savings in the process. She consulted me as a psychologist. After a lengthy court battle and an investment of thousands of dollars the Grievers' children were returned to them.

The Way the System Works

THE ABOVE are not isolated instances; they are the way the system normally works. Under the guise of helping groups in need—

How Many Battered Children?

RELIABLE statistics about the child-welfare bureaucracy are scarce, but those that exist confirm Dr. Farber's contention that the system is at least as likely to harass innocent parents and unnecessarily place children in a damaging foster-care system as it is to protect abused children.

According to a Department of Health and Human Services study of 44 states (each state handles its own child-welfare system and data), in 1990 2.7 million children were reported abused and neglected. But two-thirds of these reports (which include anonymous phone calls to "hot lines") were not substantiated.

Unfortunately, that would still seem to leave 893,856 bruised, battered, and sexually abused children. But, according to a study by the American Humane Association, cases involving sexual or major physical abuse in 1986 came to 153,000—about 20 per cent of the total substantiated cases. (Another 84,000 cases were unspecified physical abuse, perhaps including some cases of major physical abuse.) The federal National Incidence Study arrived at roughly similar results in 1986, determining there were 161,000 cases of serious maltreatment that year.

Messrs. Lowry and Samuelson are members of NR*'s editorial staff.*

Richard Wexler, author of *Wounded Innocents*, estimates that out of every 100 reports of alleged child abuse: "at least 58 are false; 21 are mostly poverty cases (deprivation of necessities); 6 are sexual abuse; 4 are minor physical abuse; 4 are unspecified physical abuse; 3 are emotional maltreatment; 3 are 'other maltreatment'; 1 is major physical abuse."

While vague categories like "deprivation of necessities" may save a child from virtual abandonment by a crack mother, they also allow the hand of the child-welfare agencies to fall heavily on low-income households. The poor are more likely to have to leave a small child at home alone while running an errand, or to live in a home that social workers would consider unsanitary. Both can be classified as neglect. According to the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, lack of supervision was the alleged maltreatment in more than 25 per cent of all cases reported in the state—the most frequent charge. A study by the Association for the Children of New Jersey found that 25 per cent of Newark's foster children were taken from parents solely because of the parents' homelessness.

Once a child is taken from his home and placed into foster care his lot may not improve. A study in Baltimore by Trudy Festinger, head of the Department of Research at NYU's School of Social Work, found that 28 per cent of the children in foster care had been abused while in the system. And the ACLU's Children's Project estimates that a child in the care of the state is ten times more likely to be abused than one in the care of his parents.

Although caseworkers are required to make "reasonable efforts" to keep a family together, a 1989 study by the University of Southern Maine found that in 44 per cent of the cases in which a child was taken from his home no reasonable effort had been made to keep him there. USM's 1992 study of Kansas found that reasonable efforts had not been made in 54.8 per cent of cases. In 86.8 per cent of cases where a child was put in foster care, Kansas failed to make the required reasonable effort to reunite him with his parents.

The Federal Government also provides a huge counterproductive financial incentive. One federal program that helps states cover the cost of placing a child in foster care and maintaining him there grew from about $300 million in 1981 to nearly $2.7 billion in 1991. But there is no countervailing federal program to help keep a child in his home.

—RICHARD LOWRY & RICHARD SAMUELSON

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poor people, children—the welfare-state bureaucracy seeks above all to perpetuate its own existence. It is a monstrous social parasite whose overriding objective—no matter how well intentioned its individual staff members—is to capture vulnerable individuals, transform them into its clients, foist its "services" upon them, undermine their autonomy, and ultimately incorporate them into its own parasitic body. It is a dictatorial state within the state that gives the appearance of benevolently serving its clients' needs, even when it is totally destroying their lives.

Paternalistic ideologies have molded the popular consciousness for so long that citizens do not notice that the bureaucracy's overt ideological operations enable it to covertly subvert the rule of law, and to substitute its own arbitrary fiat for the protections of constitutional democracy.

While all too many children, particularly in poverty-stricken and drug-infested sectors of the inner city, do need some sort of protection, the system is by and large not designed to help them. (There are exceptions, such as a very small "family preservation" program in New York City.) Richard Wexler, among others, has documented the destructive impact upon children of child-welfare agencies across the United States. [see box, page 46.] The majority of removals are for allegations of neglect, or "emotional maltreatment." Neglect usually means that the child comes from a poor family and, like his parents, suffers from the hardships of poverty. As Wexler observes, "Children are taken away because the family does not have a place to live. Children are taken away because the food stamps have run out. Children are taken away because the family can't pay for the heat."

Corroboration comes from Dr. Lawrence Aber, professor of psychology at Columbia University, who stated conservatively that "more than half" the cases agencies label as neglect are really poverty cases. Trevor Grant, former Director of Social Service of CWA, who resigned "in disgust" in 1991 after six years, believes the figure is closer to 85 per cent. "For the most trivial reasons families are destroyed. If the furniture is broken down or the house is messy, CWA workers will remove the child. When in doubt, the safest practice for the workers is to remove the children and then to file neglect charges that never have to be proved in court."

As for emotional maltreatment, in practice it means anything a child-welfare worker wants it to mean. In one survey child-welfare workers described some of the "emotional maltreatment" that they believed constituted grounds for removing a child from his parents' custody. The list included singling out one child for more punishment and chores and fewer rewards, forcing the child to wear clothing "inappropriate" for his or her age or sex, not providing "security or stability" for the child, barring the child from extracurricular activities "without sufficient reason or alternative," and using "excessive" threats or psychological punishment.

In the view of Dr. Monty Weinstein, virtually all families charged with "emotional maltreatment" ought to retain custody of their children. He stated, "In some cases counseling is indicated, but in most cases it's merely an issue of a caseworker imposing their own definition of good parenting on parents who are fully capable of taking care of their children."

There are approximately 400,000 children in the foster-care system nationwide. Only a small minority of these children have been separated from parents who are dangerous to them. The overwhelming majority have been separated from loving and responsible parents. One does not need to be a child psychologist to realize the devastating effect of removing a child from parents with whom he or she is deeply bonded. The main effect of the child-welfare bureaucracy's interventions is to abrogate the right of children to have parents.

Even if the child-welfare agencies were able to offer an earthly paradise to the children it took over, many of us would still have qualms about a government agency arrogating to itself the right to decide who is a fit parent. But life in the foster-care system is scarcely paradise. New York State Assemblyman Cecile Singer, who chairs the Assembly Standing Committee on Children and Families, calls it "a lifetime system of rootless wandering." Dr. Mark Ginsberg, president of the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapists, has said, "The abuse of children by and through the child-welfare system is one of the

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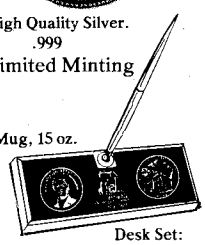

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major scandals of American life today."

Wexler demonstrates in his book that the overwhelming majority of these children are subjected to multiple placements, and most never find a stable home. One young veteran of foster care told Wexler, "The people that I've seen, the kids that have emerged [from foster care] are . . . dead. Their hearts are functioning, the old heart's pumping the blood around. But they're basically dead inside. It's been killed. Either they had to kill it to survive physically, or somebody else killed it in them. Whatever it is that makes people human."

Wexler estimates that approximately half of the homeless in New York City came from the foster-care system. Most of them had parents who loved them. An 11-year-old boy, who was fortunate enough to be returned to his mother, told a congressional committee, "They took almost five years away from my life. That's almost one-half of my whole life that I spent just waiting to come back to my real family. It was terrible to be put in lots of different homes with lots of strangers, knowing they wouldn't let me be with my mother. I wanted to be with my mother and my brothers and sister. One time I ran away from a foster home and back to my mom, but the social worker wouldn't let me stay. . . . The only help I wanted from the social workers was to go back to my mom, but they didn't help us with that. The foster-care people are trying to tell my mother that she's not—that she's not good enough right now? She's good enough for me any time."

The system doesn't even have a strong record of saving children from serious physical abuse. Its poor performance is due to two factors. First, the rate of abuse in the foster-care system is much greater than the national average; foster parents do not have to go through a screening process, and many are in it purely for financial gain. Second, many children who have been physically abused are returned by the child-welfare bureaucracy to the abuser, if he or she "cooperates" and says the right things in therapy. (It is estimated that 35 to 55 per cent of all child-abuse deaths involve children previously known to child-protective services.)

In addition to the bureaucratic imperative underlying the present system, there are economic factors. The Federal Government provides massive reimbursement for foster-care programs nationwide, but little money is available for preventive services. In New York City, Wexler noted, the city contracts for preventive services with some of the same agencies that live off foster care. The result is that virtually nothing is done to provide families with the kinds of services that they want, such as rent subsidies, day care, etc., though money is always available for the one service that does not necessarily help to keep the family together, i.e., "therapy." Wexler notes, "These agencies prefer placing children in foster care—and keeping them there—because they are paid for foster care on a per diem basis. As soon as they do what they're supposed to do—reunite families—their money stops" (*New York Daily News*, July 17, 1991).

Reverse, March!

WHAT, THEN, can be done to protect the welfare of children? In the case of the inner cities, which account for the overwhelming majority of children placed in foster care, I think the answer is to be found in Alan Keyes's proposal—made in these pages last year, after the Los Angeles riot—to devolve the functions currently usurped by federal, state, and local bureaucracies onto decision-making councils elected by the residents of each neighborhood.

Keyes wrote, "The federal and state governments should work with the councils to transfer the administration of social-welfare programs into the hands of persons chosen by and answering to the councils." The child-welfare system and the family-court system should be abolished. Instead, the neighborhood committees should investigate charges of neglect, and if the "neglect" is merely due to poverty the councils should allocate financial resources derived from the federal and state governments to help alleviate the problems. If the parents are truly negligent, the council should work with foster-care agencies to find temporary placements for the children and/or with family therapists to provide counseling for the family, with the goal of eventual reunification.

In the case of physical and sexual abuse, there should be criminal prosecution of the accused. Under the guise of providing "therapy," social workers and mental-health personnel have prevented criminals from receiving just punishment for their crimes, at the same time as they remove children from good and loving parents. Child-welfare workers have repeatedly returned children to parents who have seriously abused them, leading to many needless deaths. This would not happen if abusers were regarded as criminals rather than as "mentally ill" individuals who can be cured by several months of talking (i.e., "therapy"). The neighborhood councils should help find appropriate placements for the children of abusers.

The objective of the judicial process should not be to determine whether an individual suffers from a "mental disorder," but whether he or she has actually been guilty of an act of physical or sexual abuse. This would allow for the restoration of the constitutional right to be considered innocent until proven guilty. Therapists who have worked with families should be allowed to testify as character witnesses, but not as expert witnesses. Professional "expertise" is a poor substitute for common sense and common decency.

The above measures would save the taxpayers millions of dollars and significantly improve the lives of children and poor people—as well as the equally aggrieved, but less numerous, middle-class victims of the child-welfare system. There is one major problem: these measures would put thousands, if not millions, of social workers, mental-health professionals, child caseworkers, administrators, and family-court personnel out of work. As Robert Woodson astutely observed ("Saving the Poor from Their Saviors," National Center for Neighborhood Enterprises, Washington, D.C.): "What we have built is a Poverty Pentagon, the principal beneficiaries of which are not the poor but those who make their livings from the poor." The dismantling of the dependency-producing welfare state is a problem comparable in nature and in magnitude to the task of demilitarization presented by the end of the Cold War.

I can think of no easy way of making this transition. It would require a massive economic and social reorganization, as well as a political battle against an entrenched bureaucracy.

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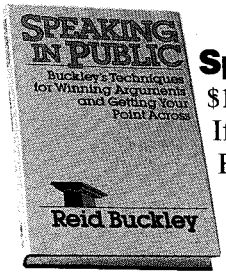

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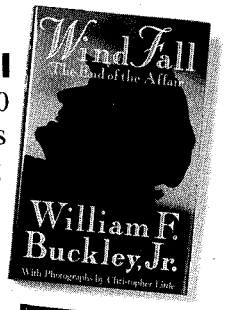

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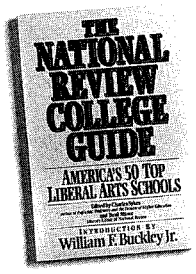

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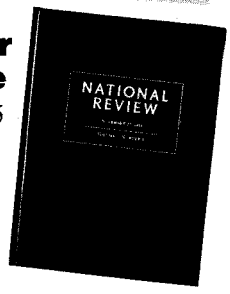

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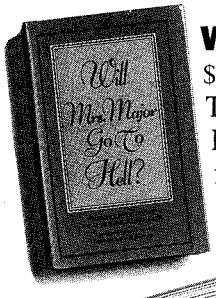

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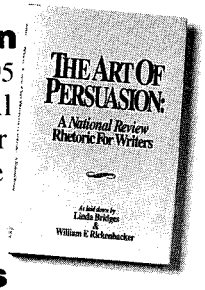

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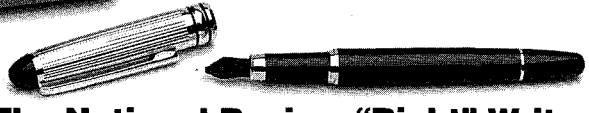

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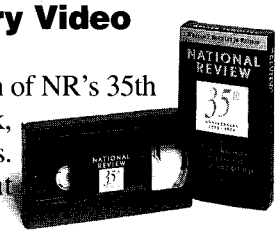

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But it is evident that we will suffer enormous costs as a nation if the magnitude of the problem prevents us from confronting it. A society that destroys its children is not a morally or spiritually viable entity. □

Mel Bradford, R I P

IN ABRAHAM'S BOSOM

A lifelong dispute about Abraham Lincoln has been remanded to a higher court.

HARRY V. JAFFA

NO ONE—outside the immediate circle of his family and close friends—will miss Mel Bradford more than I. His opinions on Lincoln, the Civil War, the Declaration of Independence, equality, and slavery were so diametrically opposite to mine that they were virtually mirror images of each other. We were, more than any of our contemporaries, I think, so convinced that the conflict that centered on the figure of Abraham Lincoln was the central conflict in American, perhaps even in world, history that we came to constitute a fellowship of our own.

In his loyalty to the Old South—to the South of which he knew from what he regarded as the only ultimately reliable authority, namely "our fathers"—Mel was perfectly intransigent. He believed in tradition in the absolute sense in which the fundamental ordering of society, and above all its convictions on the ultimately important things—such as God and the universe—were transmitted by the family. Of course, this meant not *any* families, but the old families, such as constituted the senatorial class in ancient republican Rome, the ones who ruled by divine right because their family gods were the gods of the city. Once in a long private conversation, I pointed out to him that the only regime that was purely patriarchal—more so even than that of the Roman republic—was that of ancient Israel. This regime alone, in the form of Orthodox Judaism, had survived into the modern world. "You ought to be a Jew, Mel," I said.

"Maybe you're right, Harry, maybe you're right," he replied, in his long squeaky Texas drawl.

Of course, Mel couldn't become a Jew, because it was not his inherited religion. That, however, illustrated the difficulty with "pure" traditionalism in a Judaeo-Christian framework. When Jesus asked: "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" (Matthew 12:48) he transformed the family of pure tradition into one constituted, not by blood, but by faith. Curiously, this is exactly what Abraham Lincoln did within the American experience.

> We have besides these men—descended by blood from our ancestors . . . —perhaps half our people who are not descended [from them] . . . German, Irish, French, and Scandinavian . . . If they look back through this history to trace their connection with those days by blood, they find they have none . . . but when they look through that old Declaration of Independence they find that those old men say that "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal," and then they feel that that moral sentiment taught in that day evidences their relation to those men, that it is the father of all moral principle in them, and that they have a right to claim it as though they were blood of the blood and flesh of the flesh of the men who wrote that declaration, and so they are.

Just as Jesus bridged the gap between the God of Israel and Mel Bradford's ancestors, who were not descended from the Fathers who stood at the foot of Mt. Sinai, so Lincoln bridged the gap between the Revolutionary Fathers and my ancestors. When Lincoln began the Gettysburg Address by invoking "our fathers who brought forth this nation" he confirmed our community as a sacramental union of "one nation, under God."

Our Separate Fathers

MEL BRADFORD could never accept this view of Lincoln, or of the Declaration as the source of our authentic tradition. Yet in a curious way we shared a faith in "our fathers"—both Biblical and American—as the source of authority and tradition. Because of that shared faith, we agreed very much in our post-bellum convictions. We shared a hatred of Communism abroad and socialism at home. We both loathed "race-based remedies." We felt much the same way about the liberal statism that would replace the family and its extension in neighborhood communities, neighborhood schools, neighborhood churches and synagogues, and voluntary charitable organizations. In fact, we shared a conviction concerning states' rights, even though Mel, following John C. Calhoun, could not see the connection that I (and Abraham Lincoln) saw between states' and natural rights.

Above all, we shared a hatred for that acid of modernity, moral relativism, which lay at the heart of the welfare state, and which was dissolving the very basis of our civilization. In 1977 I presented a paper on *Measure for Measure* at a Shakespeare conference at the University of Dallas. It was entitled "Chastity as a Political Principle," and in it I set out what I believed to be Shakespeare's finding of moral laxity in private life as the basis for the disintegration of public morality. Shakespeare's play is a drama of the restoration of the family of republican Rome—as is symbolized in part by the silent presence of old Romans at the end. Mel was most enthusiastic at this presentation; both from a literary and a philosophic perspective, he felt it represented complete agreement as to what we understood conservatism to be.

Joining Lincoln's Party

IT WAS accordingly not surprising that Mel called on me when he decided in 1981 to become a candidate for the chairmanship for the National Endowment of the Humanities.

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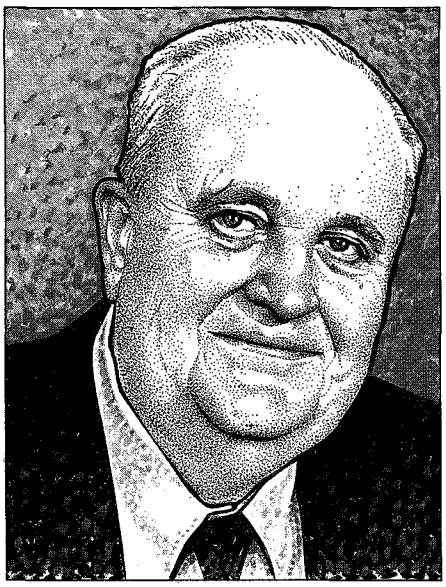

D. F. Bach

I wrote in his behalf to the Reagan White House, making plain our differences, but also giving it as my opinion that Mel was as loyal a member of the Reagan coalition as could be found. Certainly it could not have been easy for him to join the party of Lincoln. But he saw that party, under Ronald Reagan, as holding out the only rational hope for the future. And I for one thought he deserved the most cordial welcome.

Since I have myself undergone a good deal of criticism—even from some of my friends—for having supported Mel as I did, I would like to say here that in doing so, I believed I was doing no more than I believed Abraham Lincoln would have done. Lincoln was a master of the art of patronage. No one, better than he, would have recognized the importance of moving the old Northeastern liberal wing of the Roosevelt Democratic Party coalition, along with the old Southwestern conservative wing of that same coalition, into the Reagan Republican coalition. In FDR's case, it was patronage pure and simple that glued these opposites together. In Reagan's case, there was a common cause to be made against the welfare state and its intellectuals. I thought Mel's appointment would have served that cause. Unfortunately, the old hatred between Northeast and Southwest was too great, and Mel's candidacy foundered. Among the ironies was the part played in the campaign against him by the circulation of his anti-Lincoln views. It just happens that those who circulated these views were, for the most part, less friendly (if possible) to Lincoln than Mel was. To them, the natural law of the Declaration was anathema. Since I was shut out of the loop for my pro-Lincoln views as effectively as Mel for his anti-Lincoln views, I never had the opportunity to explain why I thought he would have had Lincoln's support!

As I return to my book on Lincoln and the Civil War, I shall always remember that no one encouraged me to write it more than Mel. I will not now have the opportunity to hear his comments when—God willing—it is finished. But our conversation will not have come to an end. I am confident that somehow, somewhere, he and I—and Abraham Lincoln—will, in the best of tempers, go on arguing into eternity. □

Mr. Jaffa is a senior fellow at the Claremont Institute.

Post Makes News

HEADLESS TABLOID IN BOTTOMLESS PIT

Can the last somewhat conservative paper in New York (and one of the few left in the country) survive?

SCOTT McCONNELL

ALMOST ANY time a *Post* writer goes to a dinner party in Manhattan, he will encounter at least one smug lawyer who says something like, "I read the *New York Post* only if someone leaves it behind in the toilet." Most others will be sympathetic about the paper's troubles but know little about them. Perhaps a third of the guests buy it occasionally or regularly (as a supplement to the *New York Times*) and know it as a stylish and gossipy read with a deep bench of columnists and the city's least politically correct cartoonist. Most importantly, they will know that there is a soberly argued but highly ideological conservative editorial page tucked into the middle of the paper—the only such page in the New York market, and one of the few in the country—and an op-ed page with regular columnists like Pat Buchanan, Evans & Novak, and Jeane Kirkpatrick.

The *Post* was founded 192 years ago by Alexander Hamilton, a fact which is printed on the front page every day. It has had two modern incarnations. The first was as a Democratic-leaning paper owned by Dolly Schiff during the postwar years, when its readership was largely Jewish and liberal (but not particularly leftist). Arthur Schlesinger Jr. was an important *Post* columnist in the 1950s. Longtime editor James Wechsler was a paragon of liberal anti-Communism.

Rupert Murdoch brought the money-losing paper in 1977, introduced a racier tabloid style, moved it to the right, and boosted circulation to nearly a million. The rightward shift to some extent followed the evolution of the *Post*'s core readership: white liberals who had gotten older and in one way or another been mugged by New York's jarring change into a more racially diverse and violent city. But the racy populist conservatism of Murdoch's *Post* was hated by the liberal establishment. In 1988, Teddy Kennedy (a Murdoch foe because of the rough treatment the senator received in the Murdoch-owned *Boston Herald*) engineered midnight legislation to deny Murdoch a waiver from an obsolete FCC law barring someone from owning a television station and a newspaper in the same market. Murdoch was forced to sell the *Post*, pass-

Mr. McConnell is a Post *columnist and member of the paper's editorial board.*

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ing it on to Peter Kalikow, a developer whose financial status turned from megarich to bankrupt when the New York real-estate market collapsed.

The *Post* staff suffered through cutbacks and salary cuts. The brazen tabloid style continued, but somewhat diluted by a lingering desire for respectability. A rump minority of conservative writers stayed on, including state editor Frederic Dicker and columnist Ray Kerrison. Harvard Law graduate Eric Breindel, a young neoconservative hired by Murdoch in 1986, remained at the helm of the editorial page. The uncompromising son of Holocaust survivors, Breindel brought together a staff to craft a page that was both loved and hated—but above all taken seriously in New York political circles. The *Post* supported Ed Koch and Rudolph Giuliani for mayor against David Dinkins (the only city paper to do so), fought on behalf of Korean grocers facing racially motivated boycotts and vandalism, stood up for the city's cops and for parents resisting plans to teach first-graders about "gay families." All of these stands distinguished the *Post* from its competitors in the tabloid market, the fatter, richer, and duller *Daily News* and *New York Newsday*.

Send in the Clowns

STILL, as Kalikow's fortunes sagged, the paper, stripped to a threadbare staff, lost readers and advertisers. Finally, on a freezing Sunday in January, Kalikow abruptly passed the *Post* off to Steven Hoffenberg, a rogue financier not even half a step ahead of Securities and Exchange Commission investigators. By March, the *Post* had been wrested from Hoffenberg by aging parking-garage magnate Abe Hirschfeld, a vulgar loon with an unquenchable thirst for publicity. Hirschfeld's first act was to fire editor-in-chief Pete Hamill and then, two days later, to announce 75 more firings and the installation of *Amsterdam News* publisher Wilbert Tatum at the paper's helm.

Hamill's firing brought despair to the news staff. Though Hamill had been editor for only three weeks, there was immense loyalty to him. The talented columnist, magazine writer, and novelist had been part of the New York literary scene for nearly thirty years. He had never edited a major paper, and conferring that kind of responsibility on him was a risk only a publisher in Hoffenberg's circumstances might have entertained. But in a brief time, Hamill had provided a shell-shocked reporting staff with the sense that there was leadership in the newsroom.

Hamill has more substantive political beliefs than other recent *Post* editors. He is one of the last representatives of blue-collar liberalism. But in recent years, it has never been hard to find strains of social conservatism running through his columns, however much he considered it a writer's duty to lambaste the rich and powerful. Certainly one could satirize the cult of personality that grew up around Hamill during the week of rebellion that followed his firing. (When the temporarily deposed editor made his second triumphant "return to the newsroom" in three days, one sportswriter called out; "Pete, are we going to have to stop work and give you a standing ovation every time you walk back to your office?") Still it was undeniable that it was the staff's respect for Hamill that made a cohesive revolt against Hirschfeld possible.

The final spark was Hirschfeld's announcement of the appointment of Tatum, sealing what one editor called the "Hitler–Stalin pact." Tatum's *Amsterdam News* is a shoddily produced, often race-baiting weekly: for years Tatum has used it to inflate the reputations of the city's black anti-Semites and radicals. There is not a single racially divisive event in New York over the last half-dozen years—from the Tawana Brawley case to the Central Park jogger case (the *Amsterdam News* supported the black teenage rapists) to the anti-Jewish riots in Crown Heights—in which the *Amsterdam News* has not played a reprehensible role. When he is downtown, among gullible and inattentive whites, Tatum unctuously plays the role of racial healer. His paper, meanwhile, keeps picking at the city's wounds.

Virtually everyone at the *Post*—from the neoconservative editorial page to the hipsters who cover the rock 'n' roll scene–understood viscerally that the Hirschfeld–Tatum duo would destroy their paper. So what followed was a week of spontaneous and glorious and inconclusive rebellion. Day One: mysterious computer problems make it "impossible" to print a Monday paper. Day Two: *Post* staff puts out the famous Alexander Hamilton mutiny edition, a paper devoted almost entirely to attacks on Hirschfeld and Tatum. Day Three: Pete Hamill's (first) triumphant return. Day Four: a rally outside the *Post* with speeches from Danny Aiello, Norman Mailer, Rudy Giuliani, and David Dinkins, among others. (The Dinkins presence was more than a bit pro forma; the *Post* has been a constant thorn in the mayor's side, and few think he loses sleep over its troubles. Moreover, Dinkins is very friendly with Tatum.) Day Five: Bankrupty judge awards the paper to Hirschfeld after an agreement bringing Hamill back for a two-week interim, pending another hearing.

Was It Victory?

FUN, but was it victory? In Tatum's brief interlude as co-publisher he carried out a rash of firings—mostly of Jews, including Eric Breindel, City Hall bureau chief David Seifman, Jack Newfield, and Albany editor Frederic Dicker. He chortled about them on black ratio station WLIB. Those fired have not been reinstated.

Meanwhile, the erratic Hirschfeld is scheduled to get full control of the paper by April 2. Other potential buyers and investors circle about, raising hopes inside the building. But no one is adept at distinguishing rich people who like to get their names mentioned in the *Times* from genuine prospects. For a while, at least, a potential franchise remains: small-size daily in the nation's biggest media market, an ideologically diverse staff of writers who generally like one another, and a virtual monopoly position over the domain of right-of-center opinion in the New York print media. All these factors are changing rapidly under extremely volatile conditions. Paper also runs occasional headlines like "Headless Body in Topless Bar."

If the *Post* does perish, that will deprive New York of the last outpost of *Front Page* journalism, a lively, unrespectable, conservative tabloid, and cede a monopoly to papers that hew to the dull pieties of politically correct liberalism, written not for cops, plumbers, truck drivers, and stockbrokers, but for professors at the Columbia School of Journalism. □

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THE VICE PRESIDENT

WASHINGTON

March 22, 1993

Dear Rusty:

Things are getting rough! Our budget package is up for a vote, and we are lobbying like mad to get it passed. I'm not sure why—we've got the votes. Still, somebody in the White House is playing hardball.

I mentioned this to HRC, and she kind of squinched up her face the way she does when Bill and I hug. She and Susan Thomases had just come back from AV, an Italian restaurant on New York Avenue, and Thomases had a take-out bag. I mentioned I had received a call from Senator Shelby of Alabama. He couldn't vote for the package, and asked if I'd intercede with HRC for him. So I suggested we should be more flexible, since we've got the votes we need. HRC unsquinched her face and sighed. I got a little nervous because Thomases was there. She scares me.

Remember that time we were paddling up the Kuelene Tributary, and I got bitten by that little black bug that will soon be extinct if we don't pass a biodiversity law, and you told me not to scratch but I scratched anyway, and my forearm got really, really big and kind of green? And do you remember that you took me to see Ha'jakeleole, the Yanonami medicine woman, and what her face looked like as she sucked the poison out of my arm? Well, that's the way Susan Thomases looks at me all the time.

HRC told me that Shelby's going to get just what he deserves, and she and Thomases kind of half laughed, half grunted. Then as she walked by, Thomases tossed her take-out bag at me and said, "Here, mountain man. Recycle this." So at least she's reaching out.

I was still worried about Shelby when I heard on CNN that Dick Armey had made an impertinent remark, something about Bill being a one-termer like Jimmy Carter, which I took as a personal insult since that makes me Walter Mondale. Armey's obsessed with taxes and government spending and economic growth—a real troublemaker. But I have to be honest and say that I was a little worried about what might hit him. Ordinarily, I wouldn't care what she would do to a Republican, but I think Armey's conservative economic theories are byproducts of his wounded inner child. If I could have a weekend with Armey—just him and me—I know he'd see the light.

Since I was scheduled to visit Texas, I dropped by the Oval Office to confer. A secretary handed me two pieces of paper to take to the President. The first was a phone message from Dick Armey. He probably wants to make up, I thought. The second was a budget directive, asking Bill to delay transferring one hundred Space Shuttle jobs to Texas. I made a mental note to give them to Bill before our meeting ended.

When I walked in, Bill just lit up. That's the kind of friendship we've developed in six months. Close.

"You smell like Italian food," Bill said. I told him what happened with Thomases and the bag from AV and how I think she's warming up to me, and he smiled that smile he gets when he talks to little kids. Then he got serious. "So you don't have any food on you?" he asked. "I've got a box of Tic Tacs," I said. He thought for a minute, then said, "Gimme."

Just then, HRC walked in. Bill swallowed the Tic Tacs in a hurry, and kind of coughed. I offered to excuse myself, but Bill quickly said that wasn't necessary. HRC, though, thought it was. I thanked her for her honesty and left. The Secret Service agent in the hall looked upset. "Is she in there alone with him?" he asked. I nodded. He went pale. He pulled out the radio mike in his lapel and shouted into it, "Alice is in with Ralph! Alice is in with Ralph! Repeat: The Kramdens are alone together!" Everyone in the outer office cleared out. I was left standing there.

"They fight, sir," explained the Secret Service agent, "a lot." I wasn't satisfied. "Every couple fights, Agent Williams. Now get up off the floor and maintain your post." I learned to talk this way as an Army journalist in Vietnam. I don't like to do it because it brings up a lot of unresolved feelings I have about my father, but sometimes the situation calls for it.

We heard a crash from the Oval Office. Then shouting, and then the sound of a piece of Jefferson china smashing into the wall. Bill was shouting, "But Hill, we have to delay the health-care-reform package; I can't raise taxes twice in one year, you moron! What do you think I am?" And she yelled back, "A coward! That's what." Crash. Bang. Pretty soon, I was down with my hands over my head like Agent Williams.

"The funny thing is, sir," he whispered to me, "what she's doing constitutes felonious behavior. She's physically attacking the President of the United States. Technically, I could go in there and shoot her."

He had just spoken, when the alarm bells rang. Bill had pushed the secret distress button beneath the top drawer of his desk. Williams just lay there. "Aren't you supposed to do something, Agent Williams?" I asked. He shook his head. "He pushes that button a lot when they're together. We're learning to adapt."

After my Texas trip, I read in the Post that the budget hardball continued. Dick Armey was being punished by not getting his phone calls returned, and poor Senator Shelby had to explain to constituents why a lot of Space Shuttle jobs had been transferred to Texas. HRC can be too vindictive, if you ask me.

Write soon, Al

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H. L. Mencken, R I P

HILTON KRAMER

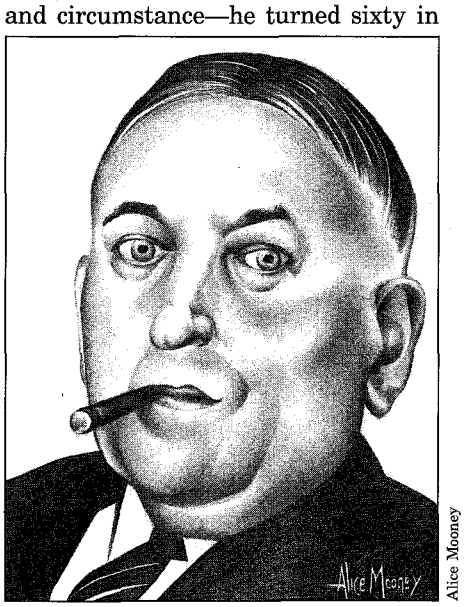
THE PASSAGE of time continues to play havoc with the reputation of H. L. Mencken. The writer who in the 1920s was so extravagantly admired by advanced opinion for his bold and hilarious *Prejudices*—as he called six volumes of his popular essays—is once again being consigned to the realm of fallen idols. Prejudices of the kind that Mencken made an important part of his comedy routines in the Twenties are no longer smiled upon in a society governed by solemnly enforced liberal pieties, and the even more objectionable prejudices that he voiced in private, which have lately been coming to light, have quickly become almost the only thing a younger generation knows about the man who was once a folk hero of the American intelligentsia.

It may therefore be worth recalling that the first time Mencken fell from grace, in the 1930s, it was largely his obtuseness about what was happening in Hitler's Germany that caused his reputation to suffer a precipitous decline. Had he confined himself to expressing his distaste for the juggernaut of Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal and the Stalinist culture of the Depression era, he would have been bitterly attacked by the Left, to be sure, but that in itself would not have been enough to bring about his downfall.

My Life as Author and Editor, by H. L. Mencken, edited and with an introduction by Jonathan Yardley (Knopf, 450 pp., $30)

What ruined Mencken's standing as a public sage—the figure who, a decade earlier, had been described by Walter Lippmann as "the most powerful personal influence on this whole generation of educated people"—was his defense of Germany at a moment when the Nazis loomed as a lethal threat to the very civilization that Mencken himself professed to represent. It was never again possible to think of Mencken as a man who could speak with authority on public affairs.

His extinction was far from complete, however. From the ashes of his renown as a critic and commentator there emerged a new reputation of a very different sort. Responding to age and circumstance—he turned sixty in 1940, and was soon obliged to resign his position on the *Baltimore Sun* papers because of his opposition to the war with Germany—Mencken devoted his talents to a vein of cheerful recollection that was new for him. "Bits and pieces of reminiscence that he had originally published in Harold Ross's *New Yorker* had been put into a book called *Happy Days* in 1940 and had been a great success," writes Jonathan Yardley in his introduction to *My Life as Author and Editor*; "readers who remembered Mencken only vaguely as a disagreeable controversialist, or had forgotten him altogether, were surprised and delighted by these sunny, uproarious tales of life in old Baltimore."



Alice Mooney

Happy Days was quickly followed by *Newspaper Days* in 1941 and *Heathen Days* in 1943. Mencken was once again a popular writer—but this time not as a scourge of American life but as its benign comic laureate. The title *Happy Days* said it all. He captured a new generation of readers with his portraits and vignettes of an America far more picturesque and painless than the one they knew during the war, or indeed the one he had so successfully pilloried in the Twenties, and no one ever taxed him for changing his tune. Before the war was over, Mencken had accomplished one of the most remarkable comebacks in American literature.

It is unlikely that the publication of *My Life as Author and Editor* will stir any comparable revival of his literary fortunes. Mencken worked on these reminiscences intermittently between 1942 and 1948, when he was disabled by the stroke that ended his literary career, but they do not constitute a proper sequel to the *Days* books. He could not sustain the same high-spirited momentum in composing them. The book was never finished, of course, and Mr. Yardley has had to cut a good deal of what, from his description, sounds like a shapeless and unwieldy manuscript. But its patchwork form is not the main problem with *My Life as Author and Editor*. The real failure of the book lies deeper. Mencken's gifts were those of a humorist and, within a very small compass, a critic, and when these gifts deserted him, as they largely had when he came to write these literary memoirs, what remained was mostly shallow bluster only occasionally relieved by observations already familiar to us from other writings.

Had the book been published fifty years ago, its principal interest would have been in Mencken's account of his relations with Dreiser, the most important of the American novelists whose work he took up as a cause. But this is a subject now more amply illuminated by the publication of the Mencken–Dreiser correspondence and several biographies of Dreiser. The little that Mencken adds to the story in this book is scarcely worth having, and it is in any case vitiated by the preening sarcasm and unremitting

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condescension that Dreiser's wayward personality and uneven talents often elicited from Mencken. You have to go back and read the essay on Dreiser in *A Book of Prefaces* (1917) to understand what it was in this writer that Mencken admired when he first read him. The same goes for Mencken's accounts of Joseph Conrad and the American critic James Huneker.

The truth is that most of what Mencken had to say about the literary life of his time is no longer very interesting. He knew very few of its major writers, and his opinions of their work, if he chanced to notice it at all, are often indistinguishable from the kind of philistine blather that on other subjects he deplored. It may amuse some readers to find Thomas Mann referred to in this book as "a jackass" and *Ulysses* described as "mainly puerile"—"I have never been able to get over a suspicion that Joyce concocted it as a kind of vengeful hoax"—but it sounds pretty stupid to me. The remark about Thomas Mann, to be sure, had to do with politics, but there is no evidence here that Mencken ever acquainted himself with Mann's novels—which is amazing when you think of the fuss Mencken made of the superiority of German culture.

Then, too, his insurmountable Anglophobia seems to have closed the door on British fiction after Conrad (who was, of course, Polish), and about the great poetry of the period Mencken was simply hopeless. Even about *The Great Gatsby*, which he liked and praised, Mencken could nonetheless write that "I certainly don't think much of *The Great Gatsby* as a story. It is in part too well-made [a charge he could never bring against Dreiser!] and in part incredible." Hemingway he disliked, Faulkner seems to have escaped him, and Henry James he dismissed in 1920 as "a sort of super-Howells, with a long row of laborious but essentially hollow books behind him." He was anything but a critic for all seasons.

Mencken's literary taste was often hostage to a single overriding interest—his hatred of the Puritan tradition in American life. It was his determined campaign to extirpate the influence of that tradition from American life and letters that won Mencken the loyalty of the emancipated younger generation in the Teens and Twenties. But this anti-Puritan animus did not always prove to be a reliable guide to literary merit.

On the subject of what Mencken actually knew about the emancipation of the younger generation that made him a cult figure, *My Life as Author and Editor* does have something interesting to tell us. He recalls a shocking discovery that he made on a visit to James Branch Cabell in Richmond in the company of Joseph Hergesheimer in 1921. On that occasion Mencken was obliged to attend a coming-out party that Cabell and his wife were giving for one of their daughters. "On the morning after the Cabell coming-out party," he writes, "Joe [Hergesheimer] tiptoed into my room at the hotel and beckoned to me to follow him. He led me to his bathroom, and there motioned to me to apply my ear to a door connecting with the bathroom of the adjoining bedroom. I could hear the voices of four or five young girls and it became immediately apparent from their talk that they had been guests at the party the night before. The conversation was really astonishing, for though I had read *This Side of Paradise* and had been hearing a lot about Flaming Youth, I was innocently unaware of the extent to which its revolt against all the ancient decorums had gone. The gabble of these fair flowers of Virginia almost made my hair stand on end. They seemed to know all the dirty words, and they used them with the freedom of Kipling's single men in barracks."

What immediately came to mind when I read this passage was Max Beerbohm's famous cartoon of Henry James on bended knee collecting his information about life—meaning, of course, sex—by looking through the keyhole of a locked bedroom door. Yet here is Mencken at the age of 41, the great arbiter of manners and morals for the new generation, self-portrayed in what amounts to the same posture. And this episode occurred a year *after* the publication of Sinclair Lewis's *Main Street*, in which Mencken is invoked as a deity of personal emancipation. You have to wonder what it was that Mencken supposed would supplant the Puritan restraints his mockery did so much to dismantle. My guess is that he never gave it a thought. His forte was provocation, not moral philosophy. On all moral and social questions Mencken was

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Political Culture and Public Diplomacy

Michael Novak and **Joshua Muravchik,** American Enterprise Institute

Guest Faculty include: **Paula Dobriansky, John Esposito, Carnes Lord, Eugene Pell**

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what we now call a libertarian, which may be why in a later period he has proved to be attractive to certain conservatives. Yet the notion that Mencken himself was some kind of conservative is simply not supportable—unless your criteria for a conservative are solely a hatred of Franklin Roosevelt, a style of comic bluster, and a fondness for Pilsner.

Not that he was any sort of liberal, either. Few writers of his time were as immune to the liberal pieties as Mencken, who never pretended to love democracy or equality and was not much of a believer in the perfectibility of the human species. And about members of that species whose racial and ethnic origins were different from his own, he did not hesitate to express his unlovely prejudices.

I have to confess that I am not as bothered by those prejudices as a lot of other people appear to be. Ugly these prejudices sometimes were, but were they ever serious? I doubt it. Mencken does seem to have had a bee in his bonnet about the Jews, and his animadversions on the subject of "prehensile kikes," etc., are on florid display in a good many pages of *My Life as Author and Editor*. Yet before we hasten to inscribe Mencken's name in the crowded roster of this century's most notorious anti-Semites, it needs to be remembered that in his published writings he usually reserved his most categorical anathemas for what he liked to characterize as the "so-called Anglo-Saxon" race.

Attempting to explain his German loyalties in *My Life as Author and Editor*, Mencken wrote that "It suddenly dawned on me, somewhat to my surprise, that the whole body of doctrine that I had been preaching was fundamentally anti-Anglo-Saxon," and his other writings bear him out. Thus in his essay on "The American Tradition," he goes on at length about the "inferiority" of this breed, which he held to be largely responsible for the deficiencies of American society.

"In the fine arts, in the sciences and even in the more complex sorts of business," he wrote, "the children of the later immigrants are running away from the descendants of the early settlers. To call the roll of Americans eminent in almost any field of human endeavor beyond that of mere dull money-grubbing is to call a list of strange and often outlandish names; even the panel of Congress presents a startling example. Of the Americans who have come into notice during the past fifty years as poets, as novelists, as critics, as painters, as sculptors, and in the minor arts, less than half bear Anglo-Saxon names, and in this minority there are few of pure Anglo-Saxon blood. So in the sciences. So in the higher reaches of engineering and technology. So in philosophy and its branches. So even in industry and agriculture." Etc.

Whether any of this was ever strictly true is not the point. No one ever relished such writing for its scientific accuracy. Mencken was acutely conscious of living in what he liked to call a "mongrel" nation, and he did not scruple to disguise his amused distaste for many of its constituent groups. These he openly ridiculed—it was part of his comic style—and in so doing he was part of the mainstream of American life. As a child growing up in an immigrant household in the 1930s, I learned very quickly that in the privacy of the family every immigrant group ridiculed every other immigrant (and non-immigrant) group, even those that were most envied. This did not prevent their offspring from forming close bonds with contemporaries from other groups, for that, too, was part of the mainstream of American life. These prejudices, moreover, were widely reflected in the political and popular culture of the time, and Mencken was a part of that culture.

It may not have been a perfect way to live, but looking back on it today I find that I prefer it to the smarmy hypocrisy that now attempts to disguise the realities of American life with the enforced cant of "diversity" and "multiculturalism." You have only to read the liberal tripe that now fills American journalism with boilerplate sentiments about our "rainbow" society to understand why an earlier generation admired Mencken's irreverent candor.

Still, even Mencken's prejudices, which were once so liberating for so many people, are now as dated as many of his literary opinions. The personal emancipation from conventional bourgeois standards that he advocated has been achieved with a vengeance, and we are left to deal with its shattering consequences. In a society in which school kids are instructed in the niceties of sodomy and daily television features endless talk about perversions of every variety, the demolition of the Puritan tradition has lost its charm. If Mencken survives a while longer as a writer, it will not be because of the *Prejudices* or a book like *My Life as Author and Editor*. Mencken will owe his survival to the *Days* books, which, though now fading into the literature of nostalgia, are still fun to read; and even more to his works on *The American Language*, which contain his most original and enduring writing about American life. The rest, alas, is history—interesting to read about, perhaps, but no longer to be read as living literature. □

Virtue Rewarded

SHIRLEY ROBIN LETWIN

WE ARE all capitalists now, or at least hardly anyone dares to commend socialism or Communism as utopias. Yet Michael Novak is right in thinking that the victory of capitalism is far from assured and that more needs to be explained. Although his message is especially telling for Catholics of Latin America and Eastern Europe, even born-and-bred non-Catholic advocates of capitalism in the West can learn much from him.

Mrs. Letwin is the author of The Anatomy of Thatcherism *(Transaction Books).*

By "capitalism," Novak means not merely or mainly an economic order based on private property and competition among buyers and sellers of goods and services, but a distinctive spirit, culture, and morality associated

The Catholic Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, by Michael Novak (Free Press, 200 pp., $22.95)

with such economic arrangements. The chief villains in his story are the German sociologist Max Weber, who traced the origins of capitalism to "the Protestant ethic," and the Italian

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Christian Democrat Amintore Fanfani, whose book *Catholicism, Protestantism, and Capitalism* (1935) provides social democrats with their bible. Novak charges them with propagating a view of capitalism that puts it at odds with Christianity and Judaism and omits or distorts its chief virtues.

Novak's original and important insight is that capitalism as understood on the European Continent should be sharply distinguished from capitalism as it has developed in the U.S. and in Britain. Oddly enough, it is the Continental version which accords with the Weberian picture of a dour, miserly, crotchety, calculating capitalism devoted to nothing other than acquisition. Weber was right, Novak acknowledges, in associating capitalism with certain moral habits, but he mistook their nature, certainly for one version of capitalism. The same view was endorsed by Fanfani when he said that the capitalist spirit regards the acquisition and use of wealth for "unlimited, individualistic, and utilitarian satisfaction" as limited only by "hedonistic society." This grim picture, Novak recognizes, has been reinforced by some British and American defenders of a market economy who—taking their cue from Darwin or Herbert Spencer, or more recently from Ayn Rand and anarchistic libertarians—laud capitalism as a free-for-all in which the ideal is the ruthless, wholly selfish, and uncultivated individualist, obsessed with accumulating more money. But nothing of the sort was advocated by Adam Smith or the Founding Fathers.

The capitalism they admired, Novak emphasizes, is distinguished by something very different—the spirit of creativity. Such capitalists are not Scrooges but industrial and commercial pioneers, artists, craftsmen, romantics, who are bold, extroverted, and venturesome; far from confining themselves to cold calculations, they follow hunches and intuitions and take pride in their creations. This is what intellectuals who ridicule capitalists as philistine and mean-minded fail to appreciate. It is this species of capitalism that is associated with a culture of creativity, where the state maintains rules that permit a great variety of voluntary associations and activities to flourish, and the future is regarded as indeterminate, an invitation to the exercise of imagination. Novak's capitalism is not, then, distinguished by greed but by openness to change, by adaptability and inventiveness—in short, by the substitution of creativity for passivity.

This is what the Catholic Church began to recognize, Novak believes, in *Rerum Novarum* in 1891, then more clearly and vigorously when the Church acquired a Polish Pope bred under Communism. John Paul II has used the Creation story to heal the breach between religion and economics which has afflicted the West for the past two hundred years. All of John Paul II's pronouncements have been inspired by the conviction that "every woman and every man has been created in the image of the creator in order to help co-create the future of the world." He has reminded us that man is endowed by God with an inalienable right to be creative and to initiate new developments, and that capitalism is a far more demanding regime than socialism or Communism because it requires us to exercise choice, accept constant change, and reject passivity. Thus the encyclicals of John Paul II have rooted the capitalist ethos in the capacity of Judaism and Christianity for "inspiring new visions and creative actions" and rejected the bleak asceticism of the Protestant ethic with which Weber saddled capitalism.

If Novak is sometimes less precise than one might wish, that is a small price to pay for his introduction of a new and revealing standpoint from which to discuss economic and political questions. From this standpoint, Novak rejects Hayek's attack on "social justice." As Pius XI made the con-

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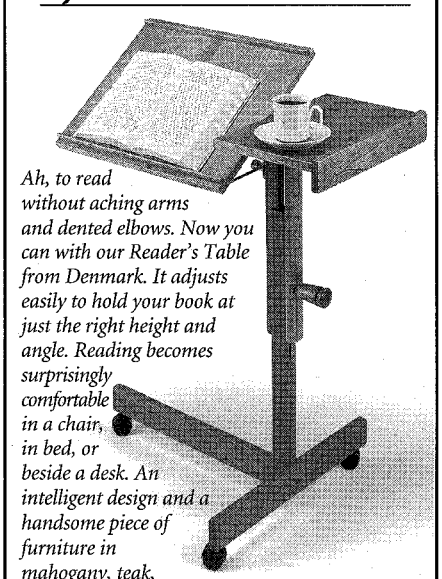

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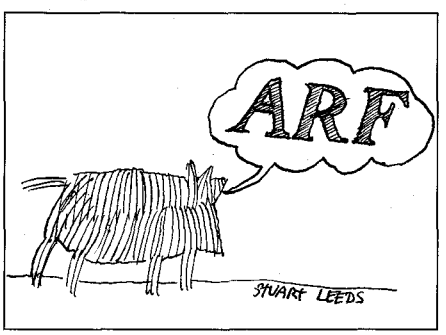
ception of social justice canonical in 1931, Novak, writing as a Catholic, cannot leave "social justice" to the well deserved death of an oxymoron. But as even loyal followers of Hayek persist in using the phrase, Novak's redefinition may more effectively dispose of a mischievous idea. What Hayek attacks, Novak rightly argues, is an arid, abstract ideal enforced by an all-powerful state which encourages dependency and submissiveness. The "social justice" defended by Novak is, rather, a "personal virtue," a readiness to use one's imagination and creativity to assist others. Novak would substitute personal work among the needy for the "sterile bureaucratic relationship" of the welfare state.

The creative spirit of Novak's kind of capitalism calls not for an ever increasing welfare state, but for a variety of imaginative initiatives by family, friends, neighbors, fraternal societies, churches, clubs to assist those in need. The difference between these two ways of providing help was well understood by the charitable organizations and friendly societies that flourished in the late nineteenth century, but which were so brutally extinguished by the welfare state that their existence is hardly remembered now. For good reason, socialists like Beatrice Webb regarded all such efforts as threats to socialism. Novak's message is that the common good is best achieved not by grand programs directed from on high by a state bureaucracy but by the varied efforts of voluntary groups, those "little platoons" praised by Burke, inventing and pursuing independent projects for assisting their fellow men.

In the course of reminding us that the welfare state is not the only way to help the needy, as socialists have taught us to believe, Novak points out that the "core illness of the underclass" arises from envy and a feeling of incompetence. Among the remedies that he suggests, he emphasizes the role of parents and especially of fathers in teaching children to take pride in self-sufficiency. He believes that this might be fostered more effectively by making support for children dependent on the work and educational record of both mothers and fathers, and by distributing benefits in settings such as local churches or schools where parents can learn, through associating with others, how to care for their children. It would help also, he believes, if the media, and especially television, used their influence to support conscientious parents; if public-housing projects were made self-governing; if businesses, schools, churches, professional associations, military establishments, and trade unions provided training programs for young people with unfocused energies.



And generally he argues that in order to bring up a generation able and willing to fend for itself we must take every opportunity to teach these young people the courtesy and discipline that constitute the art of civil association.

In emphasizing the "creativity" of capitalism and the need to replace the welfare state with the work of "little platoons," Novak has hit upon what is now the leading social issue. No one would dare to deny the superiority of a free society over a socialist paradise. The economic argument for capitalism and against socialism has been well aired by brilliant expositors. Of course, many still remain to be persuaded. But what has received hardly any attention is the need to rebut the argument that identifies capitalism with greed and selfishness. And since, at the same time, the difficulties of the "underclass" attract ever more attention, above all in the more affluent countries, we are now increasingly being tempted to adopt the innocuous-sounding "strategies" and "subsidies" so beloved by social democrats, which—we are assured—are the only cures for the evils of capitalism. It is through these apparently innocent "strategies" and "subsidies," through "cooperation" between "industry and labor," through government "investment in infrastructure" that socialism is insinuating its way back to power. And it will not be finally defeated until it is generally recognized by rich and poor alike that the quality of life enjoyed by a community depends ultimately not on what the state does but on the moral character of its people. Novak's book is a notable contribution to the spread of that gospel. □

The Hero of Main Street?

RICHARD VIGILANTE

WHEN Kevin Phillips's editor at Random House, Jason Epstein, told me about this book two years ago, he was unable to contain his glee that the country's most famous Republican political theorist was finally really, really going to get Reagan. Phillips would show how the Gipper had betrayed his own populist agenda, selling out middle- and working-class Reagan Democrats by selling the country to the rich.

Epstein's excitement seems to have gotten the better of him. He has allowed Phillips to release a book so thin and self-contradictory in argument, so pedestrian in its analysis, so mindlessly dependent on obviously suspect factoids, dubious sources, incoherent compilations of anecdotes, and loosely strung together quotations from special pleaders masquerading as experts, and so ignorant of the relevant scholarship, that it is difficult to see how Phillips's reputation can survive. He has, I suppose, one hope: despite its relentless refusal to rise above the intellectual level of "think" pieces from the feature section of a small-city newspaper, the book is almost impossible to read.

Phillips starts in the right place: The American middle and working classes, especially families with children, are unhappy; their finances, quality of life, and power in society are in decline. This unhappiness will be the central issue of American politics for the foreseeable future.

Boiling Point: Democrats, Republicans, and the Decline of Middle-Class Prosperity, by Kevin Phillips (Random House, 336 pp., $23)

Phillips's mission, however, is to

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trivialize this crisis by fitting it into a theory of political cycles characterized by recurrent capitalist "heydays" (e.g., the Twenties, the Eighties) during which Republican regimes try to boost economic growth by redistributing income from the middle class to the rich, but which are ultimately disastrous because the nation depends on a healthy middle class.

In other words, Ronnie did it. His main weapon was a reversal in tax policy by which middle-income families, promised a tax cut, actually paid more, while the rich paid lower rates. Phillips is particularly offended by the latter change; for him, flattening the tax code so that the rich pay much the same rates as everyone else is clearly the greater offense. This would make some sense if he believed that cutting rates for the rich caused high taxes on the middle class. But Phillips concedes that upper-bracket tax reductions produced a net revenue increase (thus financing, as Lawrence Lindsey has shown, Reagan's rate cuts for the middle class). That makes moot Phillips's many, many pages of agonizing about Reagan's sweet deal for the rich: if Reagan's tax cuts for the rich did not cause the present plight of the middle class, reversing those cuts cannot cure it.

Phillips does spend some time on the absolute rise in the middle-class tax burden, which has been devastating. He points out that in 1948 federal taxes of all sorts were insignificant for an average American family. The dependent exemption of that era was worth over $7,000 in today's terms. If the same rules applied today, a mortgage-paying family of husband, nonworking wife, and two children might pay no federal income taxes on the first $30,000 or so of family income.

But because he desperately wants to argue that Reagan was particularly hard on the middle class, he gets Eighties tax policy exactly backward. He downplays Reagan's middle-class income-tax cuts, and instead pretends to believe that the core of Reagan's policy was the rises in Social Security and state and local taxes that largely offset the income-tax cuts. This is ridiculous. Reagan failed to reverse the trend of rising Social Security taxes. But he did not significantly accelerate it (though Phillips at one point implies he did, by failing to specify how much of the increases under Reagan had been scheduled by Carter).

The real story of the 1980s is that Reagan was the only President in the postwar era to give the middle class significant tax relief. Measured against what would have happened to middle-class tax rates had Reagan not intervened (a chart one never sees), his rate cuts of just under 25 per cent, the more than doubling of the dependent exemption, the repeal of the marriage penalty, and above all the indexing of tax rates to halt bracket creep, loom as a stunning if temporary reversal of the post-1948 upward trend.

Although the decline or stagnation in family income is in some sense the subject of this book, Phillips has nothing edifying to say about it. He recognizes, as does everyone, that the prob-

Mr. Vigilante's Strikeout: The Daily News Strike and the Future of American Labor *is forthcoming from Poseidon.*

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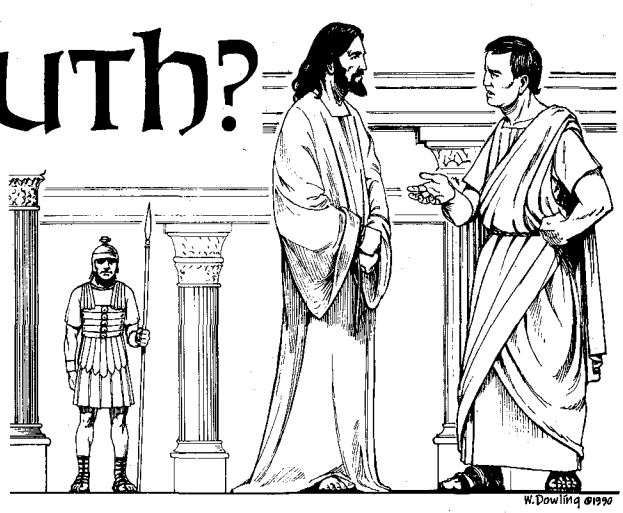

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lem started in the early 1970s at the latest. Phillips cannot hide the fact that Reagan, through the tax cuts and the resulting boom, did temporarily raise middle-class income in the mid 1980s, thus laying even firmer claim to the distinction of being the only persuasively pro-middle-class President in recent years.

Still, Phillips does his best to blame Reagan. He makes much of statistics showing the rising share of national income earned by the rich under Reagan, but downplays the booby traps concealed by them: e.g., if a rich retiree under a 70 per cent tax rate invests everything in tax-free municipal bonds, his reported income will be zero even if his actual income is $1 million; if a tax-rate cut prompts him to move into taxable investments, his recorded "share" of national income will jump from zero to over $1 million.

Statistical faux pas aside, merely showing how well the rich are doing, once again, is of little help in analyzing the problems of the middle class. The best Phillips can do is a pastiche of nightly-news insights on alleged side effects of the Reagan boom—a blizzard of anecdotes in support of the obsolete notion of permanent American industrial decline, which, with his perfect instinct for the hackneyed pseudo-insight, he blames on the Reagan-era financial industry's obsession with paper fortunes.

Ultimately Phillips resorts to a sort of psycho-politico-historical analysis of the dangers of inequality. The result is a particularly wretched example of the half-baked grand-historical-trend genre, jumping around between snippets of Dutch, Spanish, English, and American history:

> Not only does economic decline curdle voter psychology, it consumes politicians and national leaders as it had from Rome down to a between-the-wars Britain managed by little-remembered prime ministers who could not stop the tide. The same could be true of the United States since the war in Vietnam and its haunting theme song, "Bye-Bye Miss American Pie."

There is lots of comparably flat-footed analysis and embarrassing prose throughout, but one thing Phillips never does is say anything politically dangerous. Though he knows that federal taxes are the biggest culprit in the middle-class squeeze, he never suggests significant relief. Middle-class tax cuts are enormously expensive and would require radical cuts in government spending.

The family's second-biggest economic problem is declining male wages: a decline caused in part by the flood of women into the workforce, reversing an historical national commitment to a high-wage, tight-labor-market economy that raised paychecks by substituting capital for labor. But mentioning this might get one in trouble with the feminists.

He briefly acknowledges that part of the decline in household income is a statistical artifact of declining household size, obtusely commenting that smaller households may need fewer resources. Households are not just "getting smaller," they are splitting, impoverishing women and children by dividing what should have been one household income into two. The solution is not to reverse Reaganism, but to change American divorce laws and admit that Dan Quayle knows more about single mothers than does Murphy Brown.

If you said that, however, it would be lot harder to sell yourself to Random House as the man-bites-dog Republican willing to say it was all Ronnie's fault. □

Big Green

ANGELO M. CODEVILLA

Science under Siege: Balancing Technology and the Environment, by Michael Fumento (Morrow, 448 pp., $27.50)

EcoScam: The False Prophets of Ecological Apocalypse, by Ronald Bailey (St. Martin's, 256 pp., $19.95)

A Fierce Green Fire: The American Environmental Movement, by Philip Shabecoff (Hill & Wang, 352 pp., $25)

MICHAEL Fumento's book shows in detail how the environmental movement has used a caricature of science to frighten people into believing that modern life is carcinogenic. Ronald Bailey demonstrates that the specters of world catastrophe—population outstripping food, depletion of natural resources, ozone holes, global cooling or warming, etc.—are outright scams perpetrated by quacks who laugh all the way to the bank. Philip Shabecoff, who covers the environmentalist beat for the *New York Times*, writes a history of the movement that uncritically accepts its every pseudo-scientific claim. Read together, these books offer a pretty thorough primer on the environmental movement.

Mr. Codevilla, a fellow at the Hoover Institution, spends more time in the wild than any green he knows.

Environmentalism is to clean air and water as Marxism is to economics. Both pretend to act out of concern for human welfare, and to be mere spokesmen for objective science. But both are movements of professional activists out to maximize their own wealth and power while reducing their opponents to helotry by way of re-education. The environmental movement is the biggest impetus for the growth of government in our time. Having largely abandoned the claim that government power makes for prosperity, efficiency, and progress, a whole class of would-be rulers now claim power as stewards of Mother Earth. The very same people who so recently marched under the banner of socialism now pursue precisely the same ends under the green banner.

Is it really possible that the great cancer scares of the past generation—the murderous toxic wastes of the Love Canal, the thousands of lives wrecked by the defoliant Agent Orange, the ultratoxic Dioxin that depopulated Seveso, the poisoning of apples by spraying orchards with the carcinogenic Alar—were false alarms? Not even honest mistakes but outright, willful lies and frauds? How, in a society where the average adult has over 14 years' schooling, could fits of mass hysteria arise, so reminiscent of hunts for witches, incubuses, or plague-spreaders? In 448 pages Michael Fumento shows that this is indeed the case, and that a profitable industry

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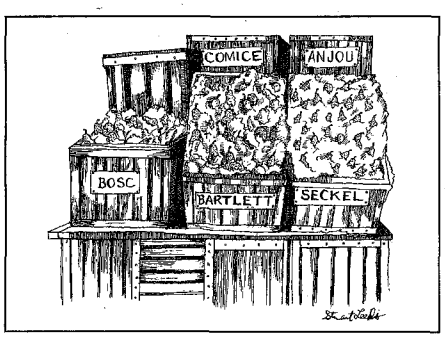
has grown up to exploit the American people's growing scientific illiteracy. Environmentalism's main hold on the public comes from manufacturing stories about how this or that product causes cancer—in short, from shouting "fire" into crowds of *New York Times* readers.

There is no evidence that the chemical Alar, when ingested at the minuscule rates in which it is found on fruit, causes cancer in humans or for that matter in rodents. On the other hand there is every reason to believe that virtually any substance, natural or man-made, will cause tumors in some living organism when administered at its "maximum tolerable dose" (MTD), defined as the dose at which a third to half of the lab animals die of non-cancer causes within a few months. The MTD is usually hundreds of thousands of times greater than the dose at which the substance occurs in normal life. A human would have to eat hundreds of tons per day of foods laced with the tested substance to ingest an amount comparable to that fed to a typical batch of lab rodents. The very fact that a substance is chosen for MTD testing virtually ensures that it will cause some tumors in something.



The chemical Alar was indicted by an MTD pseudo-study issued by the leftist Natural Resources Defense Council. The study was then passed along by a public-relations firm to friendly media (the firm had previously marketed the Sandinistas as well as the Grenadan and Angolan Communists). Alar was convicted by *60 Minutes*, *Donahue*, and *The Today Show*, as well as by the women's magazines. The responsible scientific community stood on the sidelines as the quacks made money, fame, and their point: Unless the right people—guess who—receive draconian regulatory powers, American capitalism will give cancer to you and your children.

In the 1970s all the right scientists, meaning the few to which the liberal

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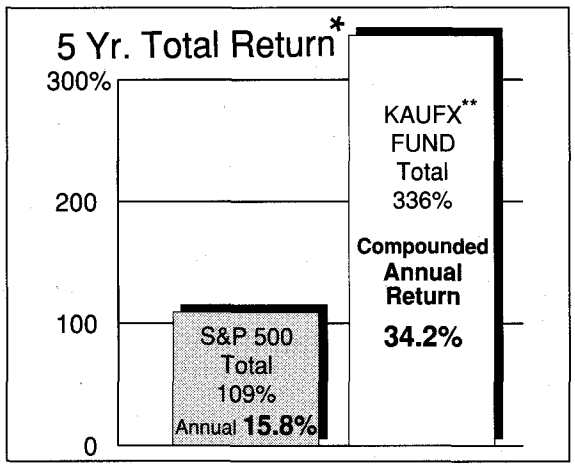

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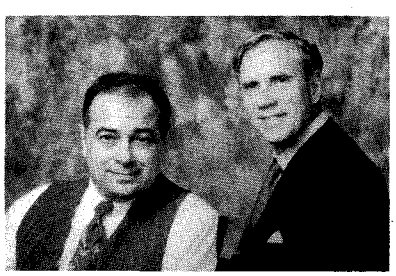

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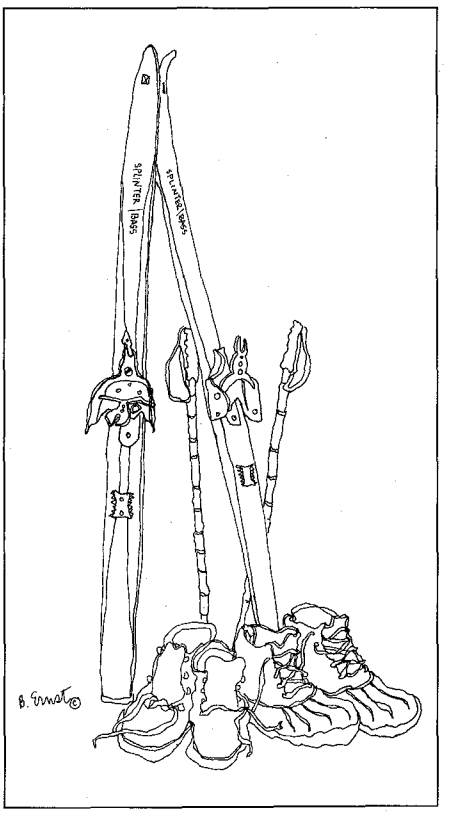
media paid attention, declared that the chemical Dioxin was the most lethal substance ever produced by man. Imperceptible doses of it would give you cancer, deform unborn babies, and alter your genes. Thus the U.S. Government evacuated and relocated residents of the Love Canal neighborhood of Niagara Falls, New York, and of Times Beach, Missouri. The Italian government did the same with the town of Seveso, and the Veterans Administration is still dealing with a flood of complaints from servicemen who had contact with the chemical a generation ago. The dollar costs are astronomical, and thousands of people have been needlessly terrified. Ninety Italian babies were killed because their mothers, having been assured that they would give birth to monsters, aborted them. In June 1981 the *New York Times* reported that "Love Canal, perhaps the nation's most prominent symbol of chemical assaults on the environment, has had no detectable effect on the incidence of cancer." As the years have passed, none of the other above-mentioned groups supposedly victimized by Dioxin have developed diseases at rates significantly higher than people like themselves elsewhere.

Fumento's book is devoted substantially to explaining the rules that ought to govern the search for connections between substances and diseases. There is nothing exotic about them: statistical clusters associating one event with another "almost always mean absolutely nothing" and usually result from taking the data in one meaningless way (say, alphabetically) rather than another (say, by height). Fumento cites a book entitled *Innumeracy: Mathematical Illiteracy and Its Consequences*, and tries to teach his readers some basic reasoning skills. The spread of environmental hysteria may indeed be attributable in large part to the plummeting standards of our educational system.

It may also, as Ronald Bailey argues, be explained as the offspring of the perennial milleniarian imperative to proclaim the end of the world (separating the Elect from the mass of evildoers), and of post–World War II government-funded Big Science. Whereas during the Middle Ages the followers of Joachim di Fiore and various Anabaptists made fortunes by rousing theologically illiterate masses with pseudot-heological babble, today second-rate scientists get rich on grants and make household names of themselves by rousing scientifically illiterate masses with apocalyptic tales couched in scientific language. Whether the subject is population, oil, metals, pollution, biotechnology, or climate, and whether the diagnosis is that humanity will freeze, fry, glow with radiation, starve, or suffer grievous mutations, their bottom line is the same: our capitalist, Judaeo-Christian civilization is too much for the planet to bear, unless governments, following the recipes of "scientists," create, in the words of Paul Ehrlich, a "new civilization" which will strictly regulate all economic activity and redress "the



inequitable distribution of wealth and resources, racism, sexism."

No sooner did the U.S. Government subsidize an army of scientists to develop the atom bomb than some of them lent their celebrity status to coalitions of left-wing groups. In 1945 the *New York Times* warned that scientists were no more disinterested or expert than anyone else about public policy. But in subsequent decades it has given in to the temptation not to look too closely at pseudo-scientific claims that it considers politically correct. Conservative politicians, for their part, have been loath to challenge politicized scientists substantively, or to cut government funding for them, or even to distinguish science from politics. Thus the likes of Ehrlich, himself academically qualified to speak on insects, have built government-funded reputations as experts on how humanity relates to the cosmos—despite sloppy or nonexistent scientific apparatus, and despite having been proved wrong again and again.

Ronald Bailey's *EcoScam* is worth buying if only for its comparisons of the predictions of environmentalists regarding the "global issues" with reality. He quotes Ehrlich, the Club of Rome, Lester Brown, Barry Commoner, Stephen Schneider, Carl Sagan, and James Hansen. Such "experts" wrote that billions of people would starve by 1985 because food production supposedly peaked in 1964. They said that the world would run out of oil, natural gas, and basic industrial metals in the 1980s; that an ice age was almost upon us, and meanwhile that the globe is warming and will soon be too hot to sustain human life; that atmospheric ozone is being eaten by chlorofluorocarbons and hence that the world is ever more naked to ultraviolet light. But in reality the world's food production is outstripping population growth at an ever-increasing rate. The real price of industrial metals, like that of food, continues to drop. Oil reserves continue to rise. Variations in ozone levels are due, insofar as anyone knows for sure, to natural phenomena. There is no evidence that any human activity has affected the world's climate or that variations in temperature in recent years are unlike those in pre-industrial times.

The fraudulence of the environmentalists' claims is not difficult to discern. Nevertheless these claims have been the basis of massive government actions, and spending. Some, like the effort to develop synthetic fuels or the throttling of nuclear power, have only wasted money. Others, like the banning of chlorofluorocarbon refrigerants, will kill people, in this case by delaying the spread of life-saving refrigeration to the Third World. But the environmentalists care less about that than about making rules they get to administer.

Philip Shabecoff believes that his book is part of an "increasingly sophisticated coverage of environmental is-

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sues." That sophistication, however, is political rather than scientific. His book uncritically accepts any and all allegations of environmental threats as facts, thinly veiling the author's professional rear by the occasional phrase "some scientists say." The reasons for his eagerness fairly jump off the page: Mr. Shabecoff and his friends think they are entitled to the power to reshape the world. Next to their craving to cut the human population by millions, to reduce consumption by some while raising that by others, and to make sure that everyone everywhere produces, consumes, and lives "sustainably," recent forms of totalitarianism seem almost quaint.

Shabecoff's skill at social and moral discernment also stands out. His best and brightest are led by the John Kenneth Galbraiths and the Mikhail Gorbachevs of this world. Neither Galbraith's now embarrassing apologies for socialism nor the revolt of millions of ordinary people against Gorbachev's order has led Shabecoff and his class to doubt the inherent benevolence of state power. They are not innocents. They know that fortunes change hands because of environmental regulations.

Make no mistake. Shabecoff's environmentalists are not gentle lovers of all nature. Since they do not see man as radically superior to beasts and radically inferior to God, they are tempted to play god to man and beast alike. As Abraham Lincoln reproached Stephen Douglas, whoever does not see the divide between all men and all beasts can be counted on to treat men like beasts whenever he finds it convenient. Nor are Mr. Shabecoff and the environmentalists civil libertarians: polluters (i.e., those accused of being polluters by the likes of Mr. Shabecoff) ought to have to prove their innocence. Power in environmental matters should reside in appointed boards and commissions, populated by the right class of people, shielded against the wrong ones.

These three books show that the environmentalist power grab succeeds with increasing frequency because all too many people assume that environmentalists merely pursue the public good according to the dictates of honest science. Ronald Bailey, Michael Fumento, and, unwittingly, Philip Shabecoff go a long way toward correcting that misapprehension. □

FILM

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I AM for method in madness, a touch of reason in rhyme, and a bit of logic even in fantasy. If the hero of *Metamorphosis* wakes up as a beetle, let him be a beetle for all concerned. And sure enough, the mailman does not perceive him as a kangaroo; the family does not farm him out as an ox at plowing time. The picture of Dorian Gray does not turn into a self-portrait by Rembrandt setting a record at Sotheby's. There are rules, limits, even to fantasy.

The new movie ***Groundhog Day***, for all its incidental pleasures, is a cheat. Its hero, Phil Connors, a jaded, arrogant, insufferable cad of a Pittsburgh TV weatherman, is sent out, as on every February 2, to cover Groundhog Day at Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania, and report on the prognostication

Mr. Simon, NR's film critic, is also theater critic for New York *magazine.*

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of his colleague and namesake, Phil the groundhog. Bored stiff and insulting everyone at the bed-and-breakfast where he is billeted (his woman producer and his cameraman, on a flimsy pretext, stay at a hotel), he gets up grouchy at 6 A.M. and sulkily narrates as the other Phil faces his shadow. And indeed, winter resumes as a huge blizzard forces him, the attractive Rita, and the nerdy Larry to spend another night in the snowed-in burg.

But when Phil (the grinch, not the groundhog) wakes up, it is Groundhog Day all over again. And the next day, and the next; he seems hog-tied into an eternity of Groundhog Days. But there is a catch: he can live the day any way he wants to. He can seduce any town belle by trial and error, or commit any kind of suicide out of sheer exasperation: he will awake under the same flowered quilt, to the same silly song and inane radio chitchat, punctually at 6 A.M., to report the same shadow play. But although he may behave better or worse, the townsfolk, though they react appropriately to his changes, go on living their own unchanged lives, convening in the town square for the groundhog ceremony, then proceeding with their admittedly uneventful existences.

This is where the rules are broken. It's fine for wretched Phil to be punished by a spell of repetition, but why would all others have to groundlessly groundhog it up, without even being, like Phil, aware of it? Why should their guiltless lives be implicated in his comeuppance? And if they do not change in any other way, why would they change in respect to Phil? The attrition grinds down his haughtiness, he becomes involved with others; he changes a flat tire for helpless old ladies, he runs to catch a young boy falling from a tree. Yet Punxsutawney, unlike Brigadoon, is not under an enchantment: it participates in Phil's fantasy without sharing in it.

Phil discovers that Rita, the producer, is really a charmer. Having used his privileged position—learning daily from his nightly mistakes—to seduce the local sexpot, Nancy, he switches his attentions to the demurely desirable Rita, and tries to conquer her by fair or ever-so-slightly foul means. Yet why should poor Rita be forced to relive this miserable day just to give Phil a chance to evolve from crafty Casanova into selfless swain? Though snooty Phil may not be missed back in the real world, why should Rita and Larry, the cameraman, be trapped in the same nightmare? Why should Rita be educating Phil? Compared to this, *Back to the Future*, which also cheated, was as pure as this movie's artificial snow.

If you can accept the inconsistent (much harder than the improbable), the rest is mildly pleasant going. Bill Murray knows how to make the initial Phil deplorable without being disgusting, and both the increased self-indulgence in his furious early repeat performances, and the gradual redemption through love for Rita, are skillfully managed. The body of the film is the rehabilitation of Phil, as Rita's recurring slaps in his face slowly dissolve into reciprocated feelings. And here the character of Rita, too, falls prey to self-contradiction. Rita, now thoroughly answering Phil's passion, nevertheless refuses to spend Groundhog Night with him even on his umpteenth try. Very well: perhaps Rita, improbably for a sophisticated TV producer who majored in nineteenth-century French poetry (!), wants to remain a virgin till marriage. Yet at film's end, as a reward for his by now enormous goodness, Phil is astounded to find her in bed with him as another Groundhog Day dawns—or the first non-groundhog dawn breaks.

But the pusillanimous filmmakers—Danny Rubin, the writer, and Harold Ramis, the co-writer and director—have another twist up their tricky sleeves. Phil, it emerges, was too tired to possess Rita (monumental goodness can be exhausting), as she, rather regretfully, remarks to her now fully redeemed bed partner. This sexual shell game, these moral tergiversations, attest to the film's queasily exploitative values. In the end, all is contrivance, to maintain an anodyne PG rating. *Groundhog Day* makes a pig of itself, and it's no use saying, "But it's only a fantasy." Tell that to Franz Kafka.

Still, for folks who can enjoy ice hockey played with soccer goals, there is something here. Andie MacDowell is an endearing Rita, though rather overshadowed by the luscious Marita Geraghty as Nancy—and the minor roles are all well taken. The movie is nicely shot by John Bailey, agreeably scored by George Fenton, and atmospherically designed and directed. But where the fantasy goes overboard is when Murray (and he a Canadian, too!) utters some unspeakable gibberish and Andie rhapsodizes, "You speak French!" On the whole, Hollywood should stay away from culture (references to Baudelaire and that most prestigious composer of soundtrack music, Rachmaninov); but *Groundhog Day* is clearly unafraid of turning into groundhogwash.

■ Minor novelists remain a wonderful source for movies, provided they are not married to the director. I refer to the Mexican Laura Esquivel, the spouse of Alfonso Arau, who produced and directed the initially attention-grabbing, but soon fulsome, overrich, and indigestible ***Like Water for Chocolate***, based on his wife's novel and screenplay. Miss Esquivel represents the feminist branch of magic realism, the Latin American fictional mode that swept the world ever since García Márquez won the Nobel Prize with his *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, which reads more like a thousand to me.

Conversely, the zesty movie Bruce

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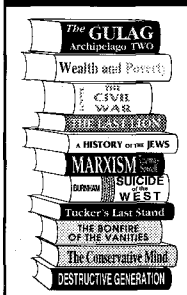

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Beresford fashioned from a novel by a minor South Carolina novelist, Josephine Humphreys, ***Rich in Love***, is a winsome delight. It, too, has quite a bit about food in it, but eating it is neither deified nor demonized *à la* Miss Esquivel; it is merely a vehicle for characterization and comedy, as it should be. When Helen Odom, after a long marriage to her amiably eccentric but relentlessly self-absorbed husband, Warren, suddenly disappears, the good old boy (not quite a duffer yet) is more shocked than hurt, and consoles himself with weird but easily-come-by sustenance: bananas dipped in peanut butter and potato-chip-and-mayonnaise sandwiches. And, eventually, with another woman: Vera Delmage, a slightly overripe unisex hairdresser, who, however, bakes a mean angel-food cake.

To be sure, Warren's younger daughter, 17-year-old Lucille, proposes to cook for him, but he kindly rejects her offer; he has always kept children and other concerned parties at a friendly arm's length. Earnest Lucille, the family's mainstay, was the one who found Helen's good-bye note, and quickly composed and substituted a warmer, less grating kiss-off. And it was she who drove Warren all over tarnation comically searching for Helen, whose defection to start "a second life" makes no sense to persons whose first life fits them like a frowzy but comfortable old slipper.

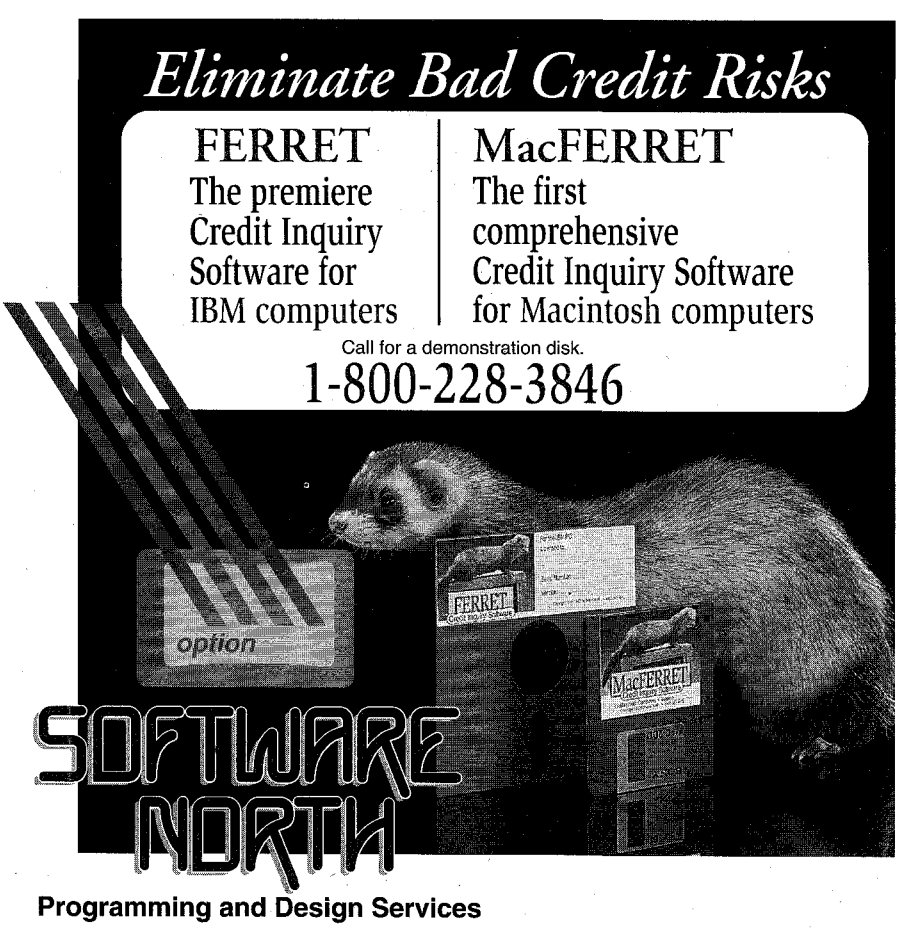
Helen, however, remains unfindable. But such is the economy of Southern exotica that for one family member lost, another promptly turns up. It's Rae, the somewhat wayward elder daughter, who got herself spliced up North to Billy McQueen, a likable Yankee who had to punch minuscule holes into his condoms to get Rae pregnant and willing to marry him. Exactly why the couple have to move in with Warren while awaiting the baby somehow slipped by me, but it matters little as one watches them enjoyably make love *and* war. Such fine points are immaterial here: the film is about how to live with one's idiosyncrasies and take pleasure in the vagaries of existence. Instead of endowing the irrational with magic status, it contemplates it like an ever-changing landscape in which everybody can find a pebble or weed to his liking.

Beresford and his screenwriter, Alfred Uhry (the same team as in *Driving Miss Daisy*, which this film in unobvious ways commodiously resembles), respect the work's gently provocative ironies. Over everything hangs a doom of human bumbling, but it's a doom that can be domesticated, made downright cozy. Thus Lucille experiences sexual initiation at first vicariously, then actively, but, in antithetical ways, less than fulfillingly. Yet she is not discouraged. We know that as some relationships are dissolved and others entered on—while still others loom just beyond the horizon—life with its seriocomic surprises will come up with something for everyone.

The director, who is capable of major wonders, here contents himself with minor ones. He guides people with his usual sure hand through puzzling yet ultimately life-asserting imbroglios, making individuals and their surroundings interact in a quizzical yet also comradely symbiosis. To this end, Beresford makes the ambience delicious, but casually, modestly so. He bypasses the obvious, renowned beauties of Charleston, and concentrates on the homelier, homier ones. He and his superb cinematographer, Peter James, capture loveliness where you'd least suspect it, say, in an Erector Set-like drawbridge over a mundane waterway, where telephoto lenses and a few filters transmute highway and canal traffic—with a bit of help from sunsets and moonlight—into a companionable dreamscape. Always there is the eye for soul-satisfying shots, e.g., one in which the ramshackle, plantation-style Odom house, with its upper- and lower-story veranda, fills out precisely the wide-screen frame. On the upper level, there are minor dramas taking place both left and right, while another spills over to the center of the lower level. This inverted triangle fitted into a rectangle, the rectangle itself perfectly covered by the camera's compass, is sublimely suggestive: there's a divinity that shapes our ends, rough-hew them how we will.

The other Beresford triumph is the performing. All the actors—some cast against type, and none of them obvious choices—act winningly. You'd never believe England's Albert Finney isn't a major Southern actor—but, of course, he is major wherever you set him down. And Kathryn Erbe is an unwobbling pivot amid this whirligig, bearing the brunt of growing up and

(Continues on page 69)



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TRANS-O-GRAM / Kem Putney

1 L	2 I		3 H	4 A	5 E	6 O	7 C	8 G		9 M	10 B	11 H		12 L	13 F	14 A	15 E		16 K		17 R
18 U	19 D		20 T		21 C	22 I	23 Q	24 B		25 P	26 E	27 O	28 L		29 W	30 G		31 C	32 J	33 B	34 N
35 A		36 M	37 E		38 A	39 S	40 V	41 I		42 F	43 C	44 G	45 O	46 T	47 K	48 R		49 B	50 M		51 P
52 D	53 A	54 E	55 X	56 H	57 G	58 F	59 C		60 L	61 Q		62 D	63 F	64 M		65 O	66 R	67 L	68 H	69 V	70 U
	71 W	72 K	73 A	74 S	75 T	76 G		77 V	78 Q	79 O	80 K	81 B	82 L	83 U		84 M	85 H	86 D	87 T	88 E	
89 N	90 I	91 B	92 R	93 O	94 X	95 P	96 L	97 F	98 T		99 M	100G	101J	102Q	103E	104W		105C	106D	107A	108N
109H	110L	111P	112F		113C		114J	115I	116G		117K		118S	119E	120U	121B		122D	123M	124N	125O
126I	127R	128E	129F	130B	131L		132F	133K	134I	135V		136O	137M	138C	139U	140G	141N	142W	143S		144Q
145T		146R	147X	148U		149E	150C	151I	152R	153X	154B	155N	156T		157P	158J		159G	160S	161H	162V
163E	164A	165Q	166K	167L		168A	169Q	170D	171C		172M	173A	174P	175W	176J	177H	178B				

DEFINITIONS

A. Colorful hirsute pirate — 38 173 73 107 35 168 53 4 14 164

B. Speech pattern — 33 121 91 154 130 49 24 81 10 178

C. State capital back in the news (2 words) — 43 113 59 31 171 7 105 150 21 138

D. State-sponsored form of gambling — 170 86 122 62 106 52 19

E. Like the miserly boxer? (hyph.) — 128 119 88 149 103 37 163 54 5 26 15

F. Fragrant springtime flower — 132 112 13 42 129 58 97 63

G. Possession — 30 116 140 57 8 76 100 44 159

H. What the anti-nuke crowd fears — 3 161 85 68 56 177 11 109

I. Where bulls run through the streets — 134 115 151 126 41 2 90 22

J. Graveyard, for one — 114 32 101 158 176

K. Stand-up comic likes the standing one — 133 80 117 72 16 47 166

L. Robin Hood's turf — 82 60 167 110 67 1 131 12 96 28

M. Leonard Slatkin's charge — 36 123 172 9 64 50 99 137 84

N. Foolhardy — 124 34 155 89 141 108

O. Meditate—à la Elsie — 93 65 125 79 45 136 6 27

P. Saturday-night special — 51 174 25 95 157 111

Q. Follows the verse — 102 165 61 78 144 169 23

R. Diplomatic understanding — 127 66 146 92 48 17 152

S. Rouses — 143 74 39 160 118

T. Strong — 20 156 46 98 87 145 75

U. Shiv of yore — 70 139 120 83 148 18

V. Unlucky Ford? — 133 77 162 69 40

W. Dirty — 175 142 71 29 104

X. "_____ Is Your Life" — 153 147 55 94

DIRECTIONS

The object of TRANS-O-GRAM is to fill in the puzzle diagram by guessing the words from their definitions, and transferring each letter of the guessed word to the correspondingly numbered square in the diagram. When the diagram is filled in it will spell out a quotation from some published work (reading normally from left to right, black boxes indicating the ends of words); also, when the words have all been filled in above, their initial letters will spell out the author and title of the quoted work. The acrostic feature, and the relative word-lengths in the diagram, will assist in the solution. Spelling and definitions on the authority of *Webster's Deluxe Unabridged Dictionary*, Second Edition.

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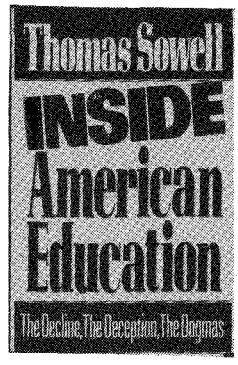

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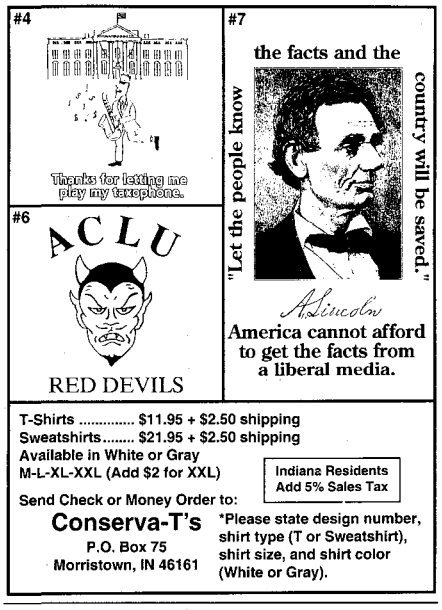
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(Continued from page 65)

the weight of the movie with equal grace. But all are perfect in this small-scale but big-hearted picture □

BOOKS IN BRIEF

If I Am Not for Myself . . . The Liberal Betrayal of the Jews, by Ruth Wisse (Free Press, 225 pp., $22.95)

IN THIS lucidly written, devastating anatomy of the liberal mind, Ruth Wisse shows how Jewish liberalism has weakened Jewish resolve in the face of Arab rejectionism and has unwittingly given anti-Semitism a new lease on life. Liberals cannot admit the existence of real evil, of an enemy beyond the reach of reason, of an unappeasable Other. The result is a fatal collusion "between the aggressor, who wants to conceal his intention in order to execute it effectively, and the liberal fundamentalist, who has to deny aggression so that he can continue to believe that humans were created in *his* image." Thus liberals, grown weary of opposing an unrelenting and unreasoning Arab rejectionism, have concluded that the cause of anti-Semitism must be *Israel's own behavior*. Beyond its immediate focus on the Jews, the larger interest of this book lies in what it has to say about liberalism—namely about the inability of liberals to oppose the forces of evil that would destroy the nations of the West. —LAWRENCE AUSTER

Truck Stop Rainbows, by Iva Pekarkova, translated by David Powelstock (Farrar, Straus, 280 pp., $22)

THIS novel, by one of the most gifted young writers around, made its author famous in Czechoslovakia, her homeland, and deserves to make her a celebrity in the United States, where she arrived as a refugee in 1985. Miss Pekarkova writes—with that wonderful Czech ability to combine humor with poignancy, tragedy with the absurd, narrative with essay—about growing up in Prague as part of a generation too young to remember the Spring of 1968. Her heroine, Fialka, begins as a free spirit: hitchhiking, engaging in one-night stands with truckers, and photographing the wastelands created by Communism. Slowly, she too corrodes, as her one-night stands turn into paying tricks. It's a coming-of-age novel, of both a person and an as yet undefined political system.

—DANIELLE CRITTENDEN

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A Republican Alternative—I

NEW YORK, MARCH 15

The British have a singular advantage over us in the whole idea of a shadow government. When the government promulgates, say, a health bill, the opposition's shadow minister of health will issue the party-line alternative, as agreed upon by the shadow prime minister and his cabinet. This doesn't exclude back-bench socialists or anybody else from advocating this or the other modification of the shadow health proposal. But it does place front and center before the public An Alternative Proposal.

One obvious reason why we don't have a shadow government is that a change of party in the Executive Branch doesn't mean that one gets government from what used to be the opposition. The legislature is independently elected, giving us the duck-billed platypus we have got so used to: a Republican President and a Democratic Congress.

Even so, the public would greatly benefit from A Republican Alternative, for instance, to the Clinton Budget. But since there is no official Republican opposition, we come across different plans, sponsored by different aggregations of Republican senators and congressmen. Among these is the Gramm–Armey Balanced Budget Implementation Act (BBIA) released a few weeks ago and widely, but undeservedly, ignored.

Dick Armey and Phil Gramm are both professional economists, a credential worth noting, and they accompany their Balanced Budget Implementation Act with a few figures—so to speak, a factual overture to the Act to come:

A significant point has to do with the success of the Gramm–Rudman Act of 1985 in accomplishing its purpose, which was to reduce the budget. "From 1986, when Gramm–Rudman went into effect, to 1989, when Gramm–Rudman was abandoned, the federal budget deficit as a percentage of GDP fell from 5.2 to 2.9 per cent." In other words, during those years the fight against a bloated deficit was as successful as the fight to which Mr. Clinton is now committed, with his farrago of new taxes, regulations, capital investment, and the rest of it. But instead of sticking to Gramm–Rudman, we ditched it and in 1990 passed the huge tax increase which proved mortal to George Bush's reputation.

Other factual material:

—For over thirty years—including the 1980s—federal receipts have averaged 18 or 19 per cent of Gross Domestic Product. Federal outlays averaged 18 or 19 per cent of GDP in the 1960s, but climbed to 24 per cent of GDP in 1993.

Professor Gary Becker, who won the Nobel Prize for Economics last year, gave a background figure in an address to the Mont Pelerin Society. "National plus local government spending in some fifty non-Commmunist countries went from an average of about 32 per cent of GDP in 1972 to 36 per cent in 1980 to 40 per cent in 1985. I believe this contributed to the sharp decline in world economic growth in the 1970s and 1980s from the previous two decades. The United States share was a bit below average, at 37 per cent in 1985, because it grew more slowly during the Reagan Administration than did government spending in other countries."

—The typical American family pays more in federal taxes than it spends on food, clothing, transportation, insurance, pension, and recreation combined.

—Forty per cent of the median family's income goes to federal, state, and local taxes.

—Thirty years ago, defense spending accounted for one-half, and entitlements for less than one-quarter, of the federal budget. Today defense is down to about 20 per cent, entitlements up to 50 per cent.

—Federal Government spending per capita has now reached $4,760.

And, most important in preparing for the Gramm–Armey Act, this datum: The growth of entitlement spending cannot be coped with by extra taxation, for the simple reason that continued growth of taxation at the current rate exceeds the useful resources of government. For example: In order to pay for Medicaid alone, anticipating a rise in expenditures consistent with the rise in the past four years, we would eat up all the revenue from a 55-cent-per-gallon increase in the tax on gasoline. And an increase that steep could devastate, indeed immobilize, the economy. □

A Republican Alternative—II

NEW YORK, MARCH 17

The Gramm–Armey BBIA would balance the budget by the year 2000. Its approach is unusual in that it would bind Congress to a number of measures.

1. With the exception of Social Security, Congress would be required to reauthorize all spending programs. This so-called sunset legislation very nearly got through Congress a dozen years ago under the sponsorship of Senator Charles Percy. The idea of sunset legislation is compelling. Much that we carry on the books is legislation anachronized by events. The best example of this is the Rural Electrification Administration. It was created in 1935 to help pay the capital cost of bringing electricity to Americans isolated in rural areas. It is a howling scandal that the REA is now used to help multi-million-dollar companies that are delighted by its philanthropic provisions, as who would not be? If you can get a loan to provide electricity at, say, 2 per cent, would you expect General Motors to turn it down?

It is so with dozens of other acts that need rethinking. The Aid to Families with Dependent Children law hasn't been looked at since 1935 and is a towering expense replete with anachronisms. Messrs. Gramm and Armey revive the notion that every law should be looked at again twenty years after its enactment and, in the absence of positive action by the legislature and the executive, should pass into limbo.

2. Entitlements (again, excepting Social Security) should be capped at a level no greater than the increase in the Consumer Price Index plus the growth in the eligible population. The major target here is, clearly, medical programs, which are costing $2,500 per capita per year. Under the proposed act, spending on such programs could not increase except to reflect inflation and an increase in population or in the covered age group. If, on a targeted day well into the new budget year, expenses threatened to exceed the allowance, a "sequester" would set in, enforcing the cap.

3. The bill would set fixed deficit tar-

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gets, leading to the balanced budget in the year 2000. Half of the proposed reductions would take place during Mr. Clinton's term—as he has himself called for, with his mare's nest of taxes and cuts. The fixed deficit targets in the bill are, for the years 1994–2000, in billions: $255, $219, $183, $147, $98, $49, and—$0. This would still add $951 billion to our total national debt, over a period of seven years. That would be to increase the national debt by 22 per cent, an increase not so large as to be economically dislocative, nor so small as to be nugatory.

4. A provision of the act would get the President into the picture in such a way as to cause a joint resolution to evolve into solid law. Under current law, by April 15 Congress is required to pass by concurrent resolution the budget priorities for the upcoming fiscal year. This resolution does not require the signature of the President, and is not therefore binding. As things now stand, the Rules Committees in Congress are permitted to waive budget rules, and often do. Under the new law, the April 15 decisions would bind Congress for the year ahead.

Criticisms of the Act will begin with its failure to increase the tax load—on the rich, and on the middle class. Messrs. Gramm and Armey are sophisticated enough to know that an increase in taxes, in particular in the higher brackets that contribute outstandingly to investment, is penny-wise legislation. The high-income people will avoid victimization by redeploying their assets. And to the extent that they cannot do so, they will simply ease up, which is the last thing the economy needs. The middle class needs no extra burdens, from energy taxes or taxes on 85 per cent of their Social Security payments. The objective has got to be to reduce the creeping national overhead. The authors of the bill remind us that May 5 is Tax Liberation Day in 1993. Up until then, everything we earn is spent by government, federal, state, or local. □

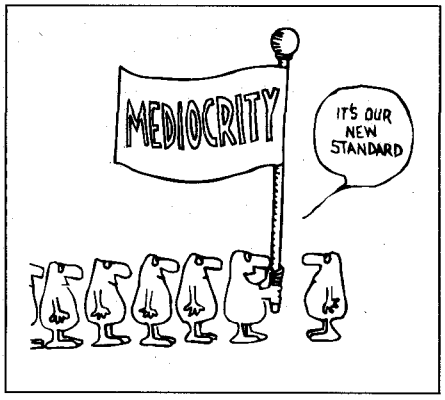
Blackening the Face of Capitalism

NEW YORK, MARCH 5

It used to astonish, back when we were young and gay, how culturally defenseless is America's capitalist class. It no longer surprises, because we have got used to it. But for a golden moment during the Eighties one supposed that there was creeping philosophical sophistication, and not only among conservative Republicans, but among many liberal Democrats. These were, with a very few exceptions, solidly behind the tax reform that, in 1986, posted 28 per cent as the highest rate of marginal taxation. This was a bill for which, for instance, Edward Kennedy voted. He would blush, if reminded of this today, after several years' harangues about the "unfairness" of the tax rate. And now with Clinton in the saddle, announcing draconian increases in the tax rate, one looks for philosophical defenses of low marginal tax rates: but one sees only utilitarian arguments. These are devastatingly persuasive. But they lack the kind of philosophical resonance one associates with "rights," as distinguished from instrumental niceties.

Why is this? In part because the case for the rule of law is emasculated in the country's colleges and universities. But in part also because of the misbehavior of conspicuous capitalists. They do indeed give capitalism a bad name. One of Mr. Clinton's contemplated reforms is philosophically indefensible. It is that a company may not deduct as a business expense any salary to an executive officer higher than one million dollars. The notion that the company paying its president two million dollars per year is not incurring a business expense simply defies logic. What is it, if not an expense? And who is to decide whether it is an expense worth the shareholders' money? A board of directors, elected by the shareholders? Or people who are elected to Congress? To say that a two-million-dollar salary is not a business expense is the equivalent of saying that the government's purchase of a two-million-dollar helicopter is not a government expense. It may be a dumb government expense, but it is a government expense, period, end argument; and if you disagree, go back to school and relearn the ABCs of logic and of language.

But democratic judgments are often made by a public that is guided by impulse. And the outrageous behavior of many capitalists tends to mold such impulses. I have in mind, for instance, the impact on the American voter of the quarrel between James D. Robinson, former chief executive of the American Express Company, and its board of directors.



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Let us not pass judgment on whether he should have been fired. The fact of it is, he was fired. And now the question comes up, What shall be his parting compensation package? The board of directors decreed that it should include $730,000 every year in retirement benefits, $1.125 million in severance pay, and $825,000 over the next two years in return for not luring from American Express any employees or customers. The directors said that according to precedents set up by the company, Mr. Robinson was entitled to these lavish awards, given the formula of awarding 60 weeks of base salary to an employee who has worked for the company for at least 12 years, as severance pay.

So how does Mr. Robinson respond?

Sourly. He wants more. He wants an executive assistant. Access to American Express's fleet of jets. A three-year consulting position with the company. And he wants the company to back an endowed chair at the Harvard Business School, presumably the James D. Robinson Chair of Executive Self-Service. While the quarrel goes on, Mr. Robinson continues to inhabit the company's lavish New York apartment off Fifth Avenue, next door to the Museum of Modern Art.

Now I think behavior of that kind results in dozens, maybe hundreds of dumb acts by congressmen, egged on by voters who are quite simply enraged by extortionate behavior. The gang at Time–Warner, exposed by Richard Clurman in his book *To the End of Time*, paid themselves millions and millions of dollars when manifestly they had done severe damage to the shareholders and blackened the face of capitalism. Not in theory, because in theory nobody can blacken capitalism's claims, but only in provoking the mobocratic spirit to smash. Just as hypocritical, fornicating preachers can give Christianity a bad name, never mind that Christianity is theoretically unassailable.

The Fortune 500 would do well to take up a collection to establish a chair at the Harvard Business School, the James D. Robinson Chair in Civil Behavior by Corporate Executives. The basic text would be an analysis of the effect of Mr. Robinson on the prestige of capitalism. □

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The Soft-Rock President

AS IF Bill Clinton didn't have enough problems, grumblings about his tenure are already being heard within the rock 'n' roll community. Members of the community, you'll recall, supported Clinton with an ardor matched only by the Esperanto-speaking and clothing-optional communities. His was supposed to be the first rock 'n' roll Presidency, carried in on a euphoric wave of Arsenio and MTV, jokey allusions to Elvis, and a reunited Fleetwood Mac.

The Carter era had once held out the same promise—Willie Nelson, after all, smoked a joint with one of Jimmy's spawn on the White House roof. But Clinton seemed capable of so much more. The possibilities were breathtaking: Sting chanting tribal songs in the Rose Garden, Axl Rose terrorizing chambermaids in the Lincoln Bedroom, Ozzy Osbourne munching bats outside the diplomatic entrance to the West Wing.

Now, alas, reality is settling in. The first discordant notes were sounded in *Rolling Stone*'s exhaustive coverage of the Inaugural extravaganzas. Community members bristled when lightweights like Michael Bolton and Kenny G took the stage and valuable airtime. "Just because Clinton can play the sax," groused a member of Megadeth, "doesn't mean he knows what rock 'n' roll is about." Another rocker was even more dismissive: "Bet Hillary Clinton likes James Taylor and Dan Fogelberg. Every victory has its price, folks, and this one's gonna make your head blow up."

I'm not certain what this last remark means, precisely, but the derisive tone is unmistakable. Members of the rock 'n' roll community, like members of all communities, can be difficult to please, but why, one wonders, are they so easy to surprise? To serious students of candidate Clinton, the rock affectations seemed as spurious as his devotion to a middle-class tax cut or Haitian refugees. The evidence was plain. At a campaign fundraiser, Barbra Streisand serenaded the candidate with a rendition of "The Way We Were"—a song that doctors who treat rock 'n' roll fans use routinely as an emetic. Yet, as Miss Streisand threw her head back and squeezed the melody through her sinuses, Clinton didn't flinch. He beamed. His eyes watered. *He mouthed the words.*

Even more definitive was an interview the candidate granted *People* last summer. Surveying the record collection in the governor's mansion in Little Rock, the interviewer asked Clinton "what album he would save if his house caught fire." After what must have been an interminable period of lower-lip-biting, the governor replied: "That's a tough choice. [Aren't they all!] But if I had to take only one, it would probably be Judy Collins's *Colors of the Day*."

As it happens, this album, though it was released in 1971, is still in print, available to any person who seeks a window onto our President's tastes—or who himself has a taste for 1960s folkie nostalgia. The cover shows Judy Collins at her most fetching, wandering a deserted beach, alone with her thoughts—the implication being that her thoughts are not small ones. The cover photo, in fact, is indistinguishable from a dozen others of the same vintage. Twenty years ago deserted California beaches were swarming with pop stars trying to get their cover photos taken as they wandered alone with their thoughts—Neil Young might trip over Richie Havens, who had just stepped on Joan Baez's foot, after she had backed into Joni Mitchell's photographer. This is one reason they all moved to Aspen.

"The President keeps saying we should reinvest in America, so I just kept the money."

OPEN *Colors of the Day*, and that distant time comes alive. On the inside cover, in a typescript familiar from Hallmark greeting cards, Judy Collins has reprinted a verse of her song lyrics, which also bears that special Hallmark touch:

What I'll give you since you asked
Is all my time together
Take the rugged sunny days
The warm and rocky weather
Take the roads that I have walked along
Looking for tomorrow's time
Peace of mind.

The lines are indicative of the album's unvarying mood. Most of the songs are in a minor key, sparsely arranged, humorless, self-absorbed, skirting the edges of intelligibility. One tune stands out: "Farewell to Tarwathie," a sea chantey sung over a background recording of humpback whales. At the time the song was considered an eloquent plea for the survival of the bulbous beasts. Today it seems almost designed to make an MTV viewer's head blow up.

It is a hard image to dislodge: the President of the United States, leader of the world's sole remaining superpower, listening with eyes closed to the groans of humpback whales, echoing through the briny deeps. I doubt that *Colors of the Day* is much listened to any more, outside the White House and those progressive college towns like Ann Arbor and Madison and Lawrence, where aging doctoral students sit cross-legged on futons in rental housing, sipping Celestial Seasons and daydreaming of the earlier, happier days that *Colors* evokes so effectively. It is with them, with Judy Collins and the balding teaching assistants, and not in the more bumptious precincts of rock 'n' roll, that our President's heart unquestionably lies. Their happy days are here again. And Megadeth, like the rest of us, is just going to have to live with it.

—ANDREW FERGUSON

Mr. Ferguson is a writer living in Washington, D.C.

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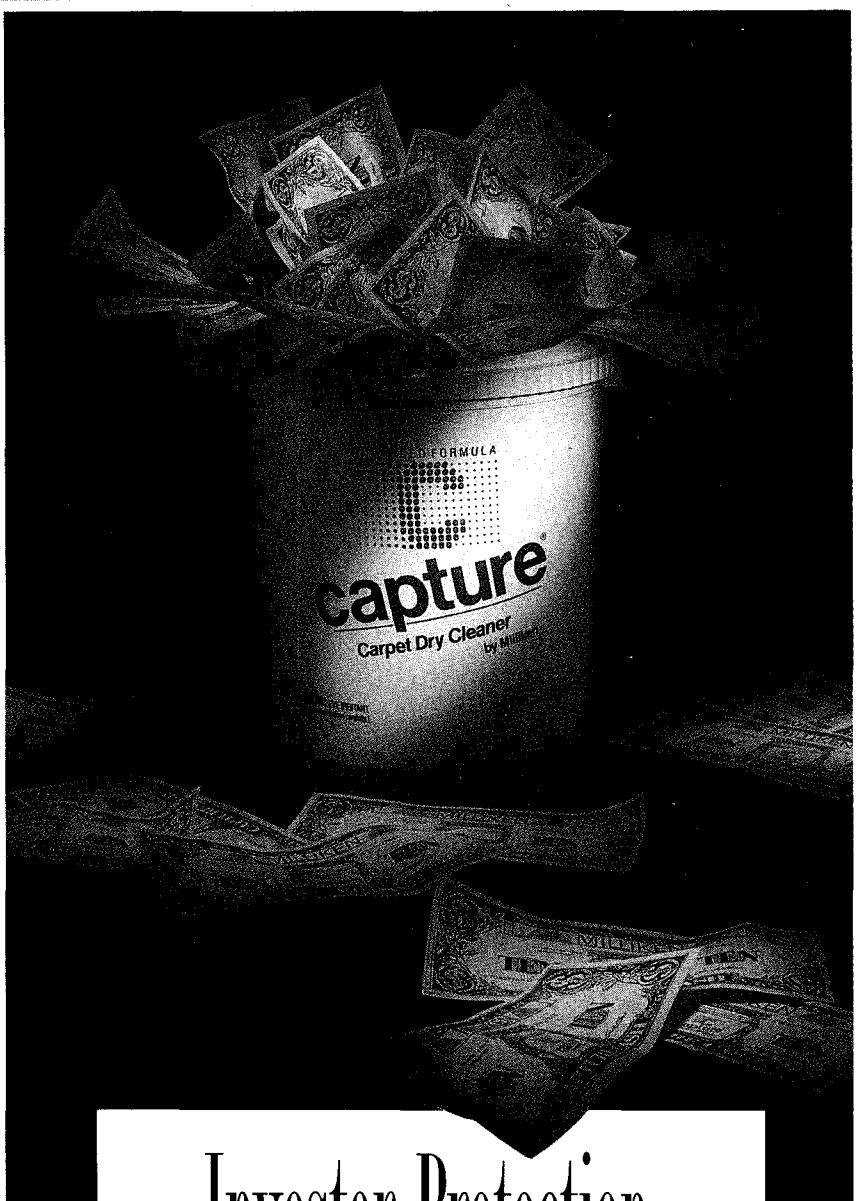

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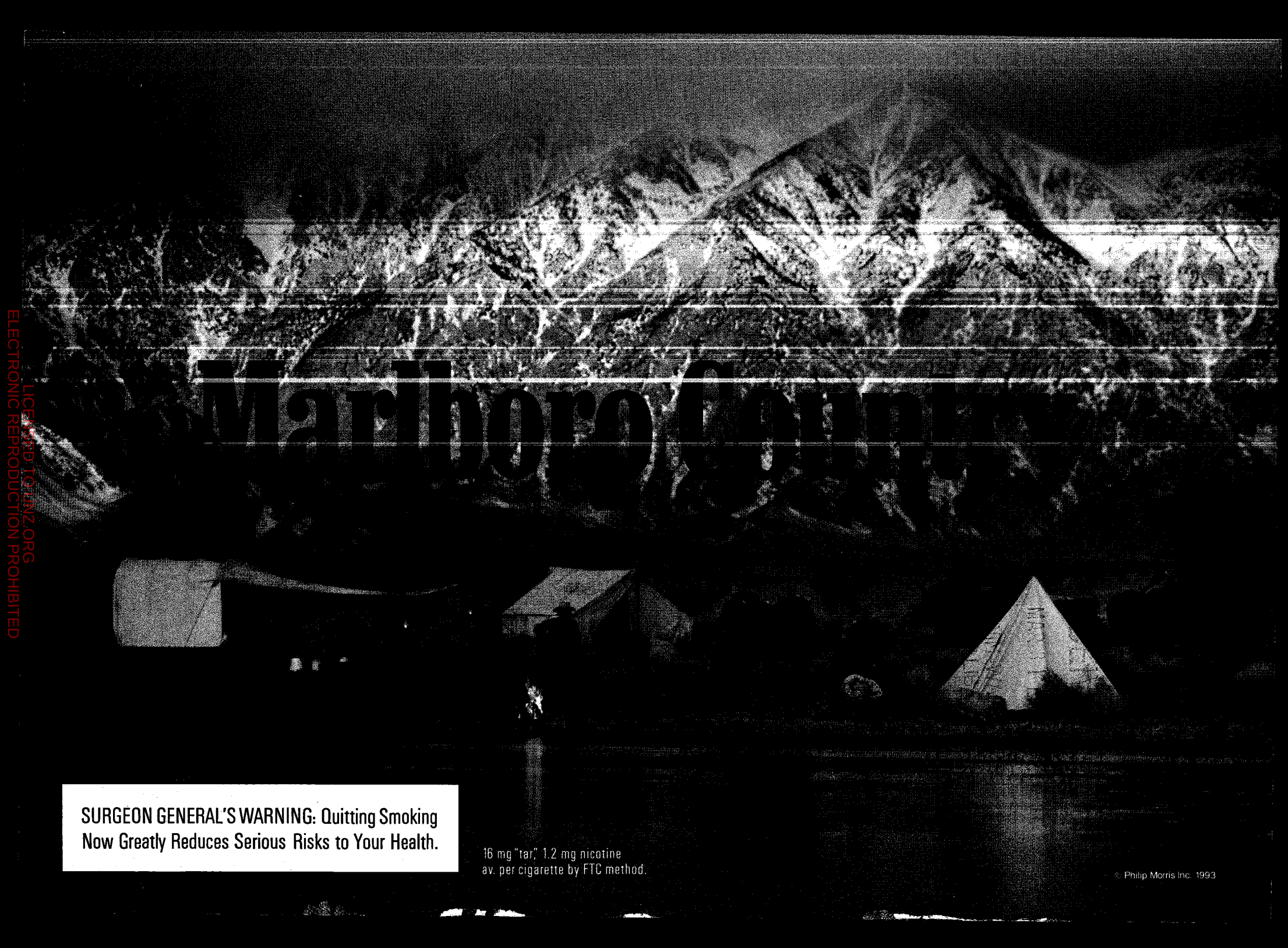

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